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## AFRICOM seeks probe of Somalia raid

Reports from locals allege that civilians were targeted in Aug. 25 operation conducted by US, African forces

BY JOHN VANDIVER  
*Stars and Stripes*

STUTTGART, Germany — U.S. Africa Command has requested an outside investigation into an August raid in Somalia by U.S. special operations forces, which have been accused of civilian casualties in connection with the incident.

AFRICOM chief Gen. Thomas Wald-

hauser asked the Navy Criminal Investigative Service to look into the Aug. 25 incident after new reports emerged from locals who said civilians were targeted during an operation U.S. troops conducted alongside Somali forces, AFRICOM said Thursday.

"Gen. Waldhauser referred the matter to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service to ensure a full exploration of the facts, given

the gravity of the allegations," spokeswoman Robyn Mack said. "AFRICOM takes all allegations of misconduct seriously and will leverage the expertise of appropriate organizations to ensure such allegations are fully and impartially investigated."

NCIS specializes in law enforcement investigations.

The past several months have been challenging for the U.S. special operations

forces in Africa. In October, four soldiers were killed in an ambush in Niger, an incident that is also under investigation. In addition, NCIS is investigating the death of an Army Green Beret who was strangled while on assignment in Mali this year. Two Navy SEALs have been placed on administrative leave in connection with the case.

SEE RAID ON PAGE 3

## NASA report: Navy missed key factors in pilot oxygen system failures

BY CLAUDIA GRISALES  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — The Navy missed a series of key factors in its investigation into the causes behind a rash of midair, oxygen-related failures in F/A-18s, that led to the deaths of at least four pilots, a NASA team concluded in a recently released report.

The 258-page report, which is slated to be the focus of an upcoming House Armed Services Committee subpanel

hearing, signals the Navy has plenty of work to do to create safer flying conditions for its pilots.

The findings raised an alarm for at least one key lawmaker Thursday.

"I know that hundreds of dedicated people in the Navy are working very hard to address this problem but the report points out that we have a long way to go and that in some areas we can do much better," said Rep. Niki Tsongas, D-Mass., who helped spearhead the push for the study. "I am hopeful that the Navy will carefully

examine the findings of this report and act on them as quickly as possible."

Tsongas is the ranking Democrat for the House Armed Services subcommittee on Tactical Air and Land Forces, which plans to hold a hearing on the matter in January.

The chairman of the panel, Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, agreed that much work remains after reading the report, which was delivered to his committee last week.

SEE PILOTS ON PAGE 5

A pilot taxis an F/A-18E Super Hornet across the flight deck of the aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower in July.

NATHAN T. BEARD/Courtesy of the U.S. Navy



## MILITARY

# AFN's transition to HD in Europe not smooth for all

By JENNIFER H. SVAN  
Stars and Stripes

KAIERSLAUTERN, Germany — American Forces Network's transition to high-definition television in Europe has been rocky so far for many off-base residents.

Since AFN made the switch overnight Monday, subscribers have left numerous comments for AFN online, voicing frustration and describing difficulties they've had in trying to get a signal with one or two decoders compatible with the upgrade and needed in off-base households to view AFN.

Some complained about long queues at the AFN help desk, where viewers are encouraged to email or call for troubleshooting advice.

Mark Hoge, a civilian employee working in the Kaiserslautern area, said after three days and at least four phone calls to the help desk this week, each with an average one-hour wait time, he still can't get AFN on his Cisco 9865 decoder.

## MILITARY

# Medical unit's move to Kaiserslautern is delayed

BY WILL MORRIS  
AND MARCUS KLOECKNER  
*Stars and Stripes*

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — The move of a medical support group from Pirmasens to Kaiserslautern, originally scheduled for this past summer, will now be delayed until the middle of next year because of permitting issues, the Army said Thursday.

The U.S. Army Medical Materiel Center, Europe, or USAMMCE, was scheduled to move in July to Kaiserslautern Army Depot from Husterhoeh Kaserne, but a round of permitting issues delayed the move.

Ray Johnson, chief of public affairs for Installation Management Command-Europe, said in July that the delay would last no more than 90 days. On Thursday, as the permitting delays continue, Johnson



MICHAEL B. KELLER/Stars and Stripes

**The United States Army Medical Materiel Center is set to move to Kaiserslautern.**

declined to speculate on a firm move date but said he doesn't expect the project to be completed until after May 2018.

Renovations have been completed at the six buildings on the Kaiserslautern depot, but the project was flagged because of an apparent misunderstanding between U.S. and German officials over required oversight under the U.S.-German Status of Forces Agreement, officials said.

"The delay (problem) is due to review of permit approvals, which is a lengthy process," Johnson said in an email. "We have gone back and provided the German federal construction office required documents, which were not originally submitted due to differing views of the type of construction completed."

In July, Martin Treutlein, a spokesman with Germany's federal construction office, said the military assumed it could complete the renovations independently, without seeking his office's approval.

The move will affect 60 Americans and 219 local Germans.

Johnson said the delays would not add to the cost of the \$40 million project.

"There have been no project cost overruns so far and up to this point in the review the German State construction office has not identified any problems with the construction," Johnson said. "We are simply going through the normal permitting process now."

The move of the Army unit to Kaiserslautern is part of the continuing drawdown of U.S. forces in Pirmasens. The official turnover of the facilities to German authorities occurred in 1994. Much of the former U.S. base has since been converted to commercial development.

The unit, which falls under U.S. Army Medical Command, provides medical logistics support for units in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and for the State Department.

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## Raid: AFRICOM rejected claims of civilian deaths during mission

## FRONT PAGE

The initial internal military review into the Aug. 25 raid, which was put together by Special Operations Command Africa, said only armed combatants were killed.

"Because recent reporting specifically alleged misconduct by U.S. forces, AFRICOM is obligated to ensure such allegations were fully reviewed," Mack said.

The decision came two weeks after AFRICOM issued a statement that rejected claims that its troops were directly involved in the killing of civilians in the Somalia town of Bairre. However, accusations by Somali civilians that civilians were among the victims have persisted, which prompted Waldausser to seek further investigation.

AFRICOM initially said U.S. forces joined Somali troops on the operation to clear an area of suspected al-Shabab militants. Ahead of the mission, those forces met with local leaders in the area and "concluded the compound had been occupied by al-Shabab," the command said.

Early in the operation, it said, Somalia National Army soldiers were fired upon, which prompted U.S. and Somalian forces to act in "self-defense, resulting in the death of seven opposing forces."

However, local government officials in Somalia have disputed that account, saying that children and one woman were among the dead.

The U.S. now has roughly 500 troops in Somalia, the largest force concentration in that country since the early 1990s. AFRICOM, operating with expanded authorization granted by President Donald Trump in April, now routinely carries out airstrikes in the country.

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## MILITARY

## Group sues DOD over sex assault data requests

BY DIANNA CAHN

*Stars and Stripes*

**WASHINGTON** — Advocates filed a lawsuit Wednesday against the U.S. government to obtain data that they say is critical to protecting troops and veterans from sexual assault and from retaliation by those accused of assault.

Charging that the military is obfuscating and illegally denying its requests for information, the nonprofit Protect Our Defenders joined forces with the Connecticut Veterans Legal Center in asking a U.S. district judge to compel all four branches to release the data under the Freedom of Information Act, or FOIA, that is meant to ensure public information is accessible to anyone who asks for it.

"The military wants people to accept when they say they have the sexual assault problem under control just on their word and do not want us or any other organization to pull back the curtain and look at the data," said retired Col. Don Christensen, president of Protect Our Defenders and former chief prosecutor of the Air Force. "The data shows consistently that they don't have it under control. The process isn't as efficient as what they claim and there's no reason to believe they are following congressional-mandated requirements."

"We want to hold the military's feet to the fire," he said.

The lawsuit against the departments of Defense and Homeland Security, is the first of its kind by the nonprofit, which is dedicated solely to ending sexual assault in the military. It was filed

by students and professors at the Yale Law School Veterans Legal Services Clinic to compel the government to conduct a reasonable search and produce what Protect Our Defenders called "wrongfully withheld records."

The Defense Department declined to comment Wednesday, saying it does not comment publicly on ongoing litigation.

The lawsuit outlines a history of discrimination against women that culminated in a "persistent and pervasive culture of harassment and discrimination." High rates of rape, sexual assault and harassment constitute a major obstacle to women's advancement in the armed forces and civilian life."

According to Defense Department statistics, an estimated 14,900 servicemembers — 8,600 women and 6,300 men — were sexually assaulted in fiscal year 2016 and many of them were assaulted more than once. Of those servicemembers, 58 percent of women and 60 percent of men who reported being assaulted said they faced retaliation and many of them reported being ostracized or retaliated against by higher ranking officials within their chain of command.

Meanwhile, the prosecution and conviction in sexual assault cases fell from prior years, according to Protect Our Defenders.

The lawsuit comes at a time of reckoning in Hollywood and on Capitol Hill over the issue of sexual assault and predatory behavior. The issue surrounded Alabama's senatorial campaign that concluded Tuesday, and CBS News released an investigative report this week citing several

### We want to hold the military's feet to the fire.'

retired Col. Don Christensen  
president of Protect Our Defenders

current and former cadets at the Air Force Academy who said they were sexually assaulted and then suffered retaliation.

Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn., who sits on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said the lawsuit was a good first step. "I welcome this legal action today and hope that this suit, combined with legislative action, will begin to break down the unacceptable barriers to justice too many victims face," Blumenthal said. "Survivors of military sexual assault are owed justice and openness in discharge proceedings. Instead, far too many are re-victimized by dishonorable discharges that bar them receiving the services and recognition they deserve."

The lawsuit cites three sets of FOIA requests that Protect Our Defenders sent to each of the military branches during the past year.

■ A July 6 request sought data related to whistleblower protections in the military.

■ A July 14 request focuses on records related to cases of sexual assault and rape in military and civilian courts. The requests contained in all the letters were the same, except there were added requests to the Air Force surrounding its claim in a prior interaction with Protect Our Defenders that

it had created a "diversity team."

■ An Aug. 23 request to all four branches was for data regarding the disposition of claims involving sexual assault cases before the Board for Correction of Military Records in each branch, along with performance evaluation and military discipline records related to gender disparities.

In nearly all cases, Protect Our Defenders followed up their requests with appeals to the various branches after determining that the responses ranged from insufficient to nonexistent. The organization challenged responses, including claims by various branches that they did not maintain the data requested or claims that they could not find data but failed to indicate how a search was conducted.

Christensen said the suit comes after years of failing to compel the military to release information he knew to be accessible. Citing an example from three years ago, shortly after he retired, Christensen said he was the Air Force response to a request claiming it did not track data regarding gender disparity flew in the face of what he knew to be true.

"I know how the military justice tracking system works," he said. "It would literally take two minutes for them to enter data into a program and get a response. We've been waiting for three years."

But in other cases, Christensen said it's possible there is no data, something he finds just as troubling, since commanders and generals have testified repeatedly on Capitol Hill that military justice is effectively prosecuting

sexual assault cases.

Arguing that military justice does not work in these cases, Christensen said he's seen no evidence that the branches are upholding recent military justice reform that gives sexual assault victims the option of a civilian rather than a military trial. Among the FOIA requests was a request for data regarding how many people opted for civilian trials. The response, Christensen said, was negligible.

"The Air Force hasn't responded," he said. "The others — Coast Guard, Navy-Marine and Army — all said they don't track the numbers of victims told they were allowed to opt for civilian authorities to prosecute."

Protect Our Defenders has been working with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, D-N.Y., and others for years to try to reform military justice so the commanding officer is no longer involved in convening a judge and jury to decide a case of sexual assault. Military generals and admirals have testified repeatedly before Congress that such a move would weaken the disciplinary authority of the commanders, but supporters argue that's the crux of this ongoing problem.

"I think it's all intertwined," Christensen said. "The Air Force Academy, the FOIA lawsuits, the retaliation numbers ... they are all an indictment of what happens when you do not have a professional criminal investigation and a professional (justice) system."

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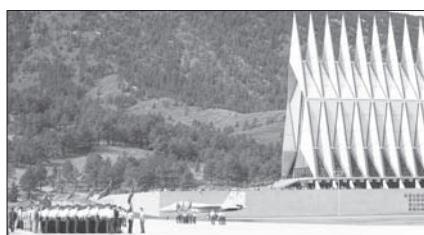
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JULIUS DELOS/Courtesy of the U.S. Air Force

Cadets conduct noon-meal formation in October at the Air Force Academy in Colorado.

other sexual misconduct, and has been accused before of badly mistreating victims.

Lt. Col. Allen Herritage, a spokesman for the academy, disputed Beasley's claim that she was a scapegoat. He told The Associated Press on Wednesday that other staffers in her office were disciplined, but he declined to say what action they faced, citing privacy laws.

Herritage said the academy identified Beasley by name because she had already discussed

the issues publicly. He acknowledged that some cadets face retaliation from other cadets for reporting sexual assault.

Beasley alleged the academy did not include 16 sexual assaults in its report to the Defense Department and Congress for the 2014-15 school year because of a technicality — the cadets declined to sign a form. She said the academy did not want to include those reports because they would have resulted in a record number of assaults.

# MILITARY

## Pilots: NASA says Navy focused on aircraft, not people

### FROM FRONT PAGE

"There is no doubt this remains a complex problem to solve that requires a well-coordinated 'systems approach' to include all factors such as the aircraft, the pilot, and the environment," Turner said. "These incidents have a direct effect on overall readiness. These episodes affect the confidence of our pilots and their ability to perform, because it is not just these events occurring, it is also the anxiety of these events occurring in succession."

In an April hearing, Adm. John Richardson, the chief of naval operations, said the Navy already had made plenty of progress in addressing fixes.

"We've improved training" for pilots and others, Richardson testified. "And we're making sure that we are listening and they all feel like they can be talking to leadership so we understand where their anxieties and concerns are."

The NASA report is the result of a provision in the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act directing that an independent review be conducted of recurring "physiological episodes" for Navy pilots. In turn, the Navy asked for the assistance of NASA, which began investigating the problem in March.

A physiological episode, which entails pilot impairment as the result of a lack of oxygen or other contributing factors, can involve decompression sickness, disorientation, hypoxia, cognitive impairment, numbness, pain and the inability to read or interpret data and instrumentation, among other factors, the report states. The episodes, also known as PEs, can have

deadly consequences, with incidences of some pilots passing out midflight, leading to fatal crashes.

In June, the Navy said in a review that four pilot deaths were tied to oxygen system failures in the cockpits of F/A-18 Hornets. The review had said reports of oxygen failures in the Hornets had increased from 57 in 2012 to 125 in 2016. By June 2017, the figure already had reached 52.

"While the Navy has introduced a number of corrective actions to address what was believed to be the primary causes of these events, PEs are still occurring," according to the report from the NASA's Engineering and Safety Center.

The Navy focused on aircraft fixes, instead of its pilots and crew, missing critical factors in its probe, the NASA team found.

The physiological episodes "do not happen to planes, they happen to people," the NASA team said in the report.

"For a long time the Navy made the assumption that the (physiological episode) resulted from a defect in one or more components of the aircraft" and the aircraft would be taken out of service, the report states. "No serious attention was paid to the interface of the human and the machine, or how they function during flight."

The Navy fixes included changes to the aircraft, such as relocating the cabin pressure gauge to make it more visible when pilots wear night-vision goggles, updated maintenance and operating procedures, and improved cabin-pressure diagnostic-testing equipment. By 2012, a new system

was introduced to track aircraft with histories of oxygen problems.

Still, the NASA team also discovered lingering concerns regarding the design and specifications of the F/A-18 aircraft related to aircrew life support, Tsongas said.

"It places particular attention on the aircraft's oxygen-generation and cabin-pressure systems, raising significant questions regarding both," she said.

The NASA team also found the Navy's medical community hasn't been involved enough in the probe, Tsongas added.

"The report examines internal Navy organizational challenges that may be making it much harder to address the PE issue," she said. "The report focuses attention on the need for the Navy's medical community to be more tied into the Navy's ongoing lines of effort."

The report also raised concerns about a breakdown in leadership trust among pilots, which the report contends is critical in light of pilots being asked to take on risky tasks. In April, more than 100 Navy pilot instructors for the T-45, which also had seen oxygen failures, refused to fly in protest of the slow pace of Navy fixes on oxygen failures.

"There has been a breakdown of trust in leadership within the pilot community," the report stated. "This has been precipitated by the failure to find a definitive cause for the PEs, the implementation of fixes that do not appear to work ... and the belief that Navy leadership is not doing enough to resolve the issue."

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## US soldiers in 2 car accidents in Germany

BY MARCUS KLOECKNER

Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOEHR, Germany — Two separate accidents involving U.S. soldiers in Germany occurred within a few hours of each other on Wednesday and Thursday, resulting in serious injuries for one soldier.

The first happened about 9:15 p.m., when a 20-year-old serviceman lost control of his vehicle in Eschenbach, near the U.S. Grafenwoehr Training Area, after hitting ice on the road. The soldier was driving with his fiancee, with summer tires on his Ford Focus, when the car skidded toward the left of the road, and struck a tree. The soldier received life-threatening injuries, but his fiancee received only minor injuries.

According to the German police report, 15 firefighters came to the scene of the accident. Damage was estimated at 15,000 euros.

The second accident occurred early Thursday, when a 27-year-old soldier was driving on NEW2, coming from Parkstein toward Huetten. The soldier was trying to pass on the icy road, but lost control over his Ford Escape and drove off the side of the road into a traffic sign and several trees. The driver, who sustained minor injuries, was taken to a clinic in Weiden.

Damage was estimated at 10,000 euros.

Stars and Stripes reporter Martin Egash contributed to this report.  
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## MILITARY

# First lady hopes giving spirit goes on into new year

BY DARLENE SUPERVILLE  
Associated Press

**WASHINGTON** — Melania Trump said Wednesday at a holiday toy drive sponsored by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve that she hopes the giving spirit that Americans displayed during a season of devastating hurricanes will continue over Christmas and into the new year.

She said the holidays are about family, service and gratitude—not gifts.

The first lady accompanied President Donald Trump on several trips to survey hurricane damage in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico, and he has said she was affected deeply by what she saw. Last week, the first lady returned to Corpus Christi, Texas, with Karen Pence, the wife of Vice President Mike Pence, to follow up on recovery efforts after Hurricane Harvey flooded

the region in late August.

"On a personal note, as my first year as first lady comes to an end, I have had the privilege to witness the spirit and resilience of so many people in our country," Melania Trump said during brief remarks at the drive for the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve Toys for Tots program. "After this year's devastating hurricane season, I hope everyone watching at home will consider giving back through programs like Toys for Tots."

She recalled her visits to survey hurricane damage and urged people to extend their generosity.

"I've seen people from all over our great nation pitch in to help those who lost everything, and I want to challenge people to continue with that giving spirit over Christmas and in the new year," the first lady said inside a warehouse at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

**First lady Melania Trump hugs the child of a military family Wednesday during a Toys for Tots event at Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling in Washington.**

"It is my hope that during this holiday season people will remember it is not about gifts. It is about family service and gratitude. We must continue to look out for and help each other," Mrs. Trump said.

She then invited several dozen children from military families to help her sort toys. Within minutes, they cleared a large table

that had been stacked with dolls, board games, toy cars and trucks, and other items, depositing them into large bins labeled "Boy," "Toddler" and "Girl."

The first lady and one young girl exchanged a high-five after she guided the girl to the bins. She also sat with kids and made construction-paper cards to go with the gifts that will be distributed throughout the Washington area.

Since its inception in 1947 and through last Christmas, Toys for Tots has distributed 550 million toys to 250 million children across the country, said Lt. Gen. Rex McMillan. The goal this year is to collect about 7 million toys for between 3 million and 4 million kids, he said.

## Monument to chaplains dedicated at Hawaii's Punchbowl cemetery

By WYATT OLSON  
*Stars and Stripes*

**HONOLULU** — It's no surprise that Richard Stenbakken would describe Wednesday's dedication of a 1,600-pound monument honoring chaplains at the Punchbowl cemetery as "a miracle."

After all, Stenbakken spent 23 years as a chaplain in the Army, then took early retirement to work on recruiting and vetting chaplains for the armed services.

The claim of divine intervention, however, arises because he spent the past two years garnering support, maneuvering through red tape and producing an 88-page application, only to see the planned dedication ceremony at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific practically derailed at the last minute by late shipping and forest fires.

"Believe me, getting that stone here as late as it got in, and getting it finished in time — every step along the way was a miracle," he said. "I mean seriously a miracle."

It was two years ago that Stenbakken was visiting the Punchbowl Cemetery, as it's referred to locally, with friends. While strolling up a promenade called the Memorial Walkway, which is lined with stone-and-bronze monuments dedicated to a host of military units and organizations, he stopped and puzzled over why the chaplains who'd served in the Pacific did not yet have their own commemoration.

He set about to make that happen.

"I think it's a reminder to people who walk up there that chaplains have been and are there to support the needs of military people and families," Stenbakken said. "So it's not only a look back, it's a look at right now because chaplains are serving all over. It's also a look to the future as chap-



WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

**Led by Rabbi Irving Elson, right, current and former military chaplains sprinkle soil from two Jima onto a monument for chaplains who served in the Pacific during a dedication ceremony Wednesday at the National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Honolulu.**

lains continue to do that. It's a memorial to the past, a touchstone for the present, and it's a commitment for the future."

The \$3,000 monument was funded by the National Conference on Ministry in the Armed Forces and the Jewish Welfare Board.

During the dedication, Maj. Gen. Paul Hurley, chief of chaplains of the U.S. Army, said the monument would "tangibly mark what it is, and why it is, chaplains are here," which he described as "our holy and sacred business of caring for these souls and their wellbeing."

Many chaplains have died in pursuit of that mission.

According to the 1994 book "Battlefield Chaplains: Catholic Priests in World War II," 100 chaplains in the Army and the Marines were killed in action during World War II.

Last week, on the day of the 76th anniversary of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Secretary of the Navy Richard Spencer awarded the Silver Star to Chaplain Lt. jg. Aloysius Schmidt for sacrificing his life in helping his shipmates from the USS Oklahoma get off the doomed battleship.

During the same war, the famed "Four Chaplains" — Lt. George Fox, Lt. Alexander Goode, Lt. John Washington and Lt.

Clark Poling — gave up their life jackets as the USS Dorchester sank in the North Atlantic in 1943. They perished so that four others might have a chance to survive.

"Anyone who has ever worn the cloth of our nation, that represented their faith tradition, has stood in the breach and made a difference and said to God, 'I will hold your people in my hand.' That's why we're here today," said John Lee III, a retired Navy chaplain, during the ceremony.

But the dedication ceremony long planned for Wednesday almost didn't happen.

The nearly 1-ton block of black granite arrived in Southern California from India only last week, said Stenbakken, a Seventh-day Adventist.

Plans to ship it to Hawaii by boat had to be abandoned. Even though the cost of shipping by air would exceed the monument's price tag, it was the only option. But first the stone had to be trucked 100 miles north to Los Angeles International Airport.

"But to get it from there to LAX, the passage was through where they were having forest fires," he said. "Nobody wanted to ship it."

He finally wrangled a trucker to do the job, and the stone arrived in Hawaii on Saturday morning. Engravers at Honor Life Memorials in Kaneoeha agreed to work through the weekend to ensure the monument would be ready for the dedication.

"We Dick says it was a miracle," Lee said, "this stone was unengraved and sitting in San Diego on Friday, and here it is today — engraved, installed and now being dedicated."

"Clearly, God favors crazy Seventh-day Adventists," he said, jokingly.

Twitter: @WyattWolson

## WAR ON TERRORISM

# US fighters intercept Russian jets over Syria

By COREY DICKSTEIN  
*Stars and Stripes*

WASHINGTON — American fighter jets fired warning flares near Russian fighters over eastern Syria on Wednesday in an attempt to drive them out of airspace controlled by the U.S.-led, anti-Islamic State coalition, Pentagon officials said.

Two American F-22 Raptors intercepted a pair of Russian Su-25 Frogfoot fighters that had crossed the Euphrates River, the agreed upon line to separate the two nations' bombing campaigns against ISIS militants in the region, said Air Force Lt. Col. Damien Pickart, a spokesman for Air Forces Central Command. A Russian Su-

35 Flanker also crossed the river during the incident.

The encounter near Abu Kamal, one of the final areas where ISIS controls land in Syria, lasted some 40 minutes, Pickart said Thursday. The F-22 pilots made several attempts to warn the Russian pilots to leave the area via an emergency communications channel, he said. Then, the U.S. pilots deployed the flares.

At one point, one of the Su-25s flew dangerously close to one of the F-22s, forcing the American pilot to "aggressively maneuver to avoid a midair collision," Pickart said.

Last month, American and Russian officials established a 45-mile line along the Euphra-

tes River in an effort to avoid potential encounters in the air, according to the Pentagon. The Russians, and the Syrian regime forces they support, agreed to remain west of the river, while the coalition and the Syrian Democratic Forces agreed to remain to its east.

But American officials warn of a troubling pattern of Russian and Syrian incursions east of the Euphrates.

Pickart said the Russians have flown east of the Euphrates on average six to eight times per day, amounting to about 10 percent of their flights.

"The coalition's greatest concern is that we could shoot down a Russian aircraft because its ac-

tions are seen as a threat to our air or ground forces," he said. "We train our aircrews to take specific actions and to make every attempt possible to de-escalate the situation wherever possible."

Pickart said the U.S. and other coalition forces remain focused on destroying ISIS, which has lost some 98 percent of the territory it once controlled in Syria and Iraq. However, he said, the coalition would defend itself or SDF fighters if they were threatened.

"It's become increasingly tough for our pilots to discern whether Russian pilots' actions are deliberate or if these are just honest mistakes," Pickart said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday during a visit

to Syria announced victory over ISIS and said he would withdraw much of his troops from the country.

Pentagon officials have been publicly skeptical of Putin's announcement, saying the Russians have previously announced plans to withdraw troops from Syria without actually downsizing its force there.

"There have been no meaningful reductions in combat troops following Russia's previous announcements [of] planned departures from Syria," Army Col. Rob Manning, a Pentagon spokesman, said Tuesday.

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## Report: US weapons fueled ISIS' 'industrial revolution of terrorism'

By ALEX HORTON  
*The Washington Post*

Islamic State may stand alone in its brutality in Iraq and Syria where it has committed civilian massacres and suicide bombings, and saluted people's homes with thousands of improvised explosives. But a new report, three years in the making, describes the group as shrewd manufacturing and logistical planners who moved weapons, munitions and bomb-making materials throughout the war zone on a scale unprecedented for a terror organization.

Conflict Armament Research, a weapons-tracking group based in Britain, documented more than 40,000 firearms and munitions across Iraq and Syria by dispatching field investigators in an arc stretching from the northern Syrian city of Kobane to south of Baghdad, Iraq's capital — a rough track of ISIS's path to conquer territory and establish its caliphate.

The report, which the researchers call the most comprehensive to date about how ISIS obtained and fielded its weapons, was published Thursday and could become a vital tool for understanding the terrorist group's deadly industrial proficiency. Here are a few takeaways:

■ ISIS used rockets supplied by the United States — possibly in violation of agreements with weapons makers.

As The Washington Post reported in July, the Trump administration ended a secretive CIA operation to arm moderate Syrian rebels battling President Bashar Assad. Few details on what arms they received are known publicly, but researchers found numerous rockets in Iraq that appear to have been purchased by the United States and supplied to Syrian groups.

In one instance, PG-9 73 mm rockets, sold by Romanian arms manufacturers to the U.S. Army in 2013 and 2014, were found

sprinkled across both battlefields. Containers with matching lot numbers were found in eastern Syria and recovered from an ISIS convoy in the Iraqi city of Fallujah, the report says. The rockets, adapted by ISIS to use in their launchers, gave militants a potent weapon against U.S.-supplied tanks and armored Humvees.

Records obtained by CAR from Romanian officials included agreements indicating the United States would not re-export those and other weapons, part of an effort to combat weapons trafficking. Saudi Arabia was another source of unauthorized weapons transfers to Syria, the report says.

The report also says the U.S. government did not respond to requests to trace this and other weapons documented by CAR. A Defense Department spokesman did not return requests for comment.

■ It took only weeks for ISIS to get its hands on U.S. anti-tank missiles.

On Dec. 12, 2015, Bulgaria exported anti-tank missile launcher tubes to the U.S. Army through an Indiana-based company called Kiesler Police Supply. Fifty-nine days later, Iraqi federal police captured the remains of one such weapon after a battle in Ramadi, Iraq, the report says. In another instance, a U.S.-backed rebel group in Syria was photographed using a launcher tube with an identical lot number, indicating it probably came from the same batch, the report says.

The episode illustrates how quickly U.S.-supplied arms can be turned against its allies, reshape a battlefield and pose danger to the small teams of U.S. Special Operations troops who routinely travel in vehicles that aren't made to withstand anti-tank weapons.

■ Industrial-scale operations and experimentation was key to spread death and fear.

CAR investigators noted materials such as aluminum paste and other precursor chemicals from Turkey used to make charges for mortars and rockets were found

in Tikrit, Mosul, Fallujah and elsewhere in Iraq. That signifies a robust logistical operation for delivering raw materials to ISIS researchers and engineers manning captured industrial machines and churning out components for munitions, the report says.

■ It confirms my theory that this is the industrial revolution of terrorism," Damien Speevers, head of CAR operations in Iraq and Syria, recently told Wired. "And for that they need raw materials and industrial facilities." Militants also modified some shoulder-fired rockets using raw materials to reduce the severity of heat from rocket launches, which is dangerous in confined urban spaces, Wired reported.

■ ISIS propaganda showing off U.S. rifles was overblown.

Videos and images of U.S.-made small arms captured by ISIS, particularly M16 and M4 service rifles, are featured prominently in propaganda videos to tout defeat over groups supplied and trained by U.S. personnel.

While those weapons appear to be diverted to senior commanders as war trophies, CAR's documentation concluded there was not a big influx of U.S.-made rifles on the battlefield. Only 3 percent of weapons and 13 percent of the ammunition documented by CAR researchers were NATO-friendly calibers, like the 5.56 mm round used in M16s and Western European countries. Virtually all other weapons and ammunition came from China, Russia and Eastern European nations.

The reasons are straightforward: Syrian troops and many Iraqi forces field AK-47 rifles and machine guns like the RPK, which use 7.62 mm ammunition produced by former communist regimes. The supply of weapons taken from the battlefield were compatible with constantly arriving shipments of 7.62 mm ammunition, making AK-47-type weapons the preferred choice for ISIS fighters.

■ Iran was responsible for



**Islamic State fighters parade down a main road in Mosul, Iraq, in a commanded Iraqi security forces armored vehicle in June 2014.**

flooding Iraq with rockets during anti-ISIS operations.

Bulgaria, Iran and Romania produced the majority of newer 73 mm rockets recovered from ISIS, the report says.

Yet the injection of brand-new Iranian anti-tank rockets is a subtle measure of how much influence Tehran sought at the height of operations against ISIS, its ideological opponent. Nearly all Iranian rockets recovered from ISIS in Iraq were produced after 2014, with 59 percent manu-

factured in 2015 alone, the report says, flowing west during Iraq's most unstable period during the conflict.

The presence of such weapons may point to at least some ISIS victories and the capture of equipment belonging to Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces, which include militias supplied and trained by Iranian military advisers. Iranian-backed groups were also used by Assad in Syria to bolster his hollowed-out army.



## NATION

# GOP not all that sad; party grapples with Ala. fallout

By STEVE PEOPLES  
AND ALAN FRAM  
*Associated Press*

**WASHINGTON** — Weary national Republicans breathed a collective sigh of relief on Wednesday, a day after voters knocked out their own party's scandal-plagued candidate in deep-red Alabama. Yet all is not well in a party committed with new rounds of infighting and a suddenly shrinking Senate majority heading into next year's midterm elections.

A semi-humbled President Donald Trump conceded that Roy Moore's loss was not his preferred outcome. He said he "would have liked to have had the seat" and an important Senate vote as he and GOP lawmakers scratch for legislative victories.

But he also acknowledged, "A lot of Republicans feel differently. They feel very happy about the way it turned out."

Indeed, it was easy to find establishment-minded Republicans — in and out of Washington — who cheered Moore's loss as the impact of the Alabama stunner echoed throughout the political world. The prospect of a high-profile Republican senator dogged by sexual misconduct accusations — and an all-but-certain ethics investigation — unnerved a GOP that's fearful of an albatross on its candidates in next year's campaigns.

Republican Alabama Sen. Richard Shelby said that Moore, a fiery conservative, would have brought a "radioactive" element to the Senate GOP.

"I'm relieved and I believe a lot of Republicans are relieved that Roy Moore and some of his

people aren't the face of the Republican Party that I know," said Shelby, who cast a write-in vote for another Republican and never backed down in his opposition to Moore.

More than 22,000 write-in votes were cast Tuesday, more than the margin of difference between the winner and the loser, suggesting many other voters refused to vote for a Democrat but couldn't accept Moore.

Meanwhile, the former state Supreme Court chief justice said he is waiting for the "final count" in the race. In a video released by his campaign Wednesday, Moore said that it had been a close race and that some military and provisional ballots had yet to be counted.

Moore said he was waiting for certification of the final vote by the Alabama secretary of state, which is expected to occur sometime between Dec. 26 and Jan. 3.

Unofficial returns show that Democrat Doug Jones defeated Moore by about 20,000 votes, or 1.5 percent.

Moore released the message several hours after Jones urged him to "do the right thing" — to concede. Moore, who is known for his evangelical politics, called the election a battle for the "heart and soul" of the country.

Sen.-elect Doug Jones' stunning Democratic victory marked a major setback for Trump and top political ally Steve Bannon. They had devoted time, resources and political capital to Moore in recent days, even as he faced the allegations of sexual misconduct and espoused views that alienated women, racial minorities, gays and Muslims.

Despite the outcome's relief for the GOP's pragmatic wing, the fight for the party's soul was hardly decided with one Alabama special election.

Allies of Bannon, who declared war on the party's establishment after leaving the White House earlier in the year, dismissed the loss as little more than a temporary setback that soon would be forgotten. Republicans who cheer Moore's loss, they said, simply would enraged Trump's most loyal supporters nationwide, who already suspected some Republican leaders were trying to undermine the president's agenda.

"They're stomping on the very base they need to turn out for their candidates in the general election in 2018," said Andy Surabian, a senior adviser to the Bannon-backed Great America PAC. He contended that "the average Republican voter across the country is pointing their finger at Mitch McConnell and the Republican establishment."

Conservative activist Mark Meckler did just that.

"One hundred percent of this I hang around Mitch McConnell's neck," said Meckler, an early tea party leader, referring to the mainstream Republican who is Senate majority leader.

At the same time, the Alabama contest sounded an undeniable alarm for Republican officials charged with defending the party's majorities in the House and the Senate next year. Under the weight of Trump's historically low approval ratings, Alabama put their concerns on steroids.

"This was a wake-up-and-smell-the-coffee moment," said Steven Law, who leads the Sen-



**U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore leaves the stage Tuesday after giving a speech at the end of an election-night watch party at the RSA activity center in Montgomery, Ala.**

MIKE STEWART/AP

ate Leadership Fund, which is aligned with Senate GOP leaders.

He said Alabama's election, like recent contests in Virginia and New Jersey, demonstrated "sky-high Democratic enthusiasm."

"Republicans are going to have to put forward top-quality candidates and run flawless campaigns to win next year even in states that trend Republican," Law said.

In the shorter term, it's unclear how the loss will affect the Republicans' governing agenda.

When Jones is sworn into office — likely in early January — the GOP's Senate majority will shrink to a pinhole-sized 51-49. That increases pressure on Republicans to push their prized \$1.5 trillion tax bill through Congress before lawmakers leave town late this month, a goal they seem likely to achieve.

The narrowing majority gives extra leverage to Republicans like moderate Maine Sen. Susan Collins, who's extracted leadership promises for accompanying legislation shoring up parts of the "Obamacare" health care law. Collins told reporters Wednesday she was confident those promises would be kept.

"All you cynics in the press will

have to be eating crow come Dec. 31," she said.

Yet Republicans cannot abandon their policy priorities after taxes if they hope to generate momentum heading into the midterms, said Tim Phillips, president of the Koch Brothers-backed Americans for Prosperity.

"Taxes are a crucial start, but they're going to need to do more," he said. Jones' victory could complicate the GOP's goals, Phillips said, particularly "if he goes the partisan-resistance route."

"If he does, then clearly it's one less vote and it will make things more difficult," he added.

The GOP already faced an uphill battle for any major legislative achievements in the near term.

Some Republicans, particularly House leaders, have talked about a drive to overhaul Medicare, Medicaid and welfare programs next year. Even if the GOP succeeds in approving special rules that would require just 50 votes, some Republicans are leery of cutting popular programs in an election year and the chances of success seem low. Democrats would oppose any such effort.

## Coroner: Ky. state lawmaker's death was 'probably suicide'

By ADAM BEAM  
*Associated Press*

**FRANKFORT, Ky.** — Dan Johnson, a Republican state lawmaker in Kentucky who defiantly denied allegations that he sexually assaulted a teenage girl in the basement of his home, died in an apparent suicide, the county coroner said.

The sexual assault accusations came amid a sexual harassment scandal involving other Republican lawmakers that unfolded at the state Capitol.

Bullitt County Coroner Dave Billings said Johnson died of a single gunshot wound Wednesday night on a road in Mount Washington, Ky. Billings said Johnson had stopped his car at the end of a bridge in a secluded area, then got out and walked to the front of the car. He said an autopsy is scheduled for Thursday morning.

"I would say it is probably suicide," he said.

Johnson was elected to the state legislature in 2016, part of a wave of Republican victories that gave the GOP control of the Kentucky House of Representatives for the

first time in nearly 100 years. He won his election despite Republican leaders urging him to drop out of the race after local media reported on some of his Facebook posts comparing Barack and Michelle Obama to monkeys.

The pastor of Heart of Fire church in Louisville, Johnson sponsored a number of bills having to do with religious liberty and teaching the Bible in public schools. But he was mostly out of the spotlight until Monday, when the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting published an account from a woman saying Johnson sexually assaulted her in the basement of his home in 2013.

At the time, the woman told police, who investigated the incident but closed the case and did not file charges.

On Tuesday, Johnson, 57, held a news conference in the pulpit of his church, which he began by leading friends and family in singing a portion of the Christ-



Johnson

mas carol "O Come All Ye Faithful." He said the allegations against him were "totally false" and said they were part of a nationwide strategy of defeating conservative Republicans. He referenced Republican Alabama U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore, who faces accusations of sexual misconduct from multiple women.

Shortly before 5 p.m. Wednesday, Johnson posted a message on his Facebook page that asked people to care for his wife. He wrote that PTSD "is a sickness that will take my life, I cannot handle it any longer. It has won this life, BUT HEAVEN IS MY HOME." The post appears to have been removed.

Michael Skoler, president of Louisville Public Media, which owns the Kentucky Center for Investigative Reporting, said everyone at the organization is "deeply sad."

"Our aim, as always, is to provide the public with fact-based, unbiased reporting and hold public officials accountable for their actions," Skoler said. "As part of our process, we reached out to Representative Johnson numerous times over the course of

a seven-month investigation. He declined requests to talk about our findings."

The sexual assault accusations against Johnson were revealed as a sexual harassment scandal involving four other Republican lawmakers was unfolding at the state Capitol. Former Republican House Speaker Jeff Hoover resigned his leadership position after acknowledging he secretly settled a sexual harassment claim with a member of his staff. Three other lawmakers were involved in the settlement, and all lost their committee chairmanships.

"I am very sad over the passing of Rep. Dan Johnson. Over the past few weeks in some of the darkest days of my life, he reached out to me, encouraged me, and prayed for me," Hoover posted on his Twitter account Wednesday night.

Republican Gov. Matt Bevin posted on his Twitter account that "my heart breaks for his family tonight."

"These are heavy days in Frankfort and in America," Bevin posted. "God indeed shed His grace on us all. ... We sure need it."

## NATION



CARLOS BONIGIANNI/Stars and Stripes

**Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., asks a question about military acquisitions during a hearing Dec. 7 on Capitol Hill in Washington.**

## McCain is hospitalized after his latest treatment for brain cancer

BY PAUL KANE  
*The Washington Post*

Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., has been admitted to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center for recovery from the side effects of another round of treatment for brain cancer, according to his office.

McCain, who missed a third straight day of Senate votes Wednesday, has been undergoing rounds of chemotherapy and radiation to treat glioblastoma, the terminal form of brain cancer he was diagnosed with in July. Mc-

Cain has been undergoing his treatments since early September at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., located next to Walter Reed.

Two friends close to McCain, requesting anonymity to speak about his condition, said there were no plans for resignation. In a statement issued from his office, McCain hopes to return "to work as soon as possible."

Republican leaders expect to hold a vote early next week on the sweeping tax-cut plan that is currently in a House-Senate negotiation. The Senate version initially

passed with 51 votes. If McCain missed the vote on final passage, Republicans would not be able to afford a single additional defec-

tion to pass the legislation.

In recent weeks, McCain, 81, has been increasingly debilitated from the side effects of what friends have said are increasingly difficult rounds of treatment. He suffered an Achilles tendon tear in early November that put him into a walking boot, and in recent weeks he has used a wheelchair to get to and from his office and the Senate floor for votes.

## Republicans criticize Mueller's probe on Russian meddling, but want him to stay

BY MARY CLARE JALONICK,  
TOM LOBIANCO  
AND SADIE GURMAN  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — House Republicans ratcheted up criticism of special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into Russian meddling Wednesday, questioning whether there was bias on his team of lawyers but stopping short of calling for his firing or resignation.

The criticism directed toward Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein at a House Judiciary Committee hearing comes after the release of anti-Donald Trump text messages exchanged between two FBI officials later assigned to the Russia probe. While Republicans on Capitol Hill are unlikely to support Mueller's removal, some appear to be laying the groundwork for suggesting the results of the investigation will be unfairly partisan.

House members focused on the hundreds of text messages between an FBI counterintelligence agent and an FBI lawyer.

Those messages, which occurred before Mueller was appointed in May to investigate potential coordination between Russia and the Trump campaign, show the officials using words like "idiot" and "loathsome human" to characterize Trump as he was running for president in 2016. One of the officials said in an election-night text that the prospect of a Trump victory was "terrifying."

Republicans also focused on past donations to Democrats made by some members of Mueller's team.

"How, with a straight face, can you say that this group of Democrat partisans are unbiased and will give President Trump a fair shake?" asked Republican Rep. Steve Chabot of Ohio.

Rosenstein defended Mueller. When asked by lawmakers he had seen good cause to fire Mueller, whom he appointed and whose work he oversees, Rosenstein replied that he had not.

"The special counsel's investi-

stein said in response to questions about whether he agreed with Trump's characterization of the probe. "The independence and integrity of the investigation are not going to be affected by anything that anyone says."

Critics of the probe may win praise from Trump, who has been pressured by some allies to push back. But there is still little appetite on Capitol Hill to have Mueller removed.

South Carolina Republican Trey Gowdy, who is leading investigations into Democrat Hillary Clinton and leaks from the Russia probe, ticked through the text messages in prosecutorial style at Wednesday's hearing. But he also said he doesn't want Mueller removed.

"I think there are prosecutors he could have found that had not donated to major political candidates—I wish he had found them," Gowdy said. "But ultimately this comes down to facts, and I'm going to give him the benefit of the doubt until otherwise necessary."

# New GOP tax accord a boon to business, wealthy

BY STEPHEN OHLEMACHER,  
ANDREW TAYLOR  
AND MARCY GORDON  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Generous tax cuts for corporations and the wealthiest Americans would be delivered in a sweeping overhaul of the tax laws, under a new agreement crafted by Republicans in Congress.

Middle- and low-income families would receive smaller tax cuts, though President Donald Trump and Republican leaders have billed the package as a huge benefit for the middle class. The agreement reached Wednesday by House and Senate GOP leaders also calls for scrapping a major tax requirement of the "Obamacare" health care law, a step toward the ultimate GOP goal of unraveling the law.

The agreement combines key elements of separate tax bills recently passed by the House and the Senate, striking compromises on some of them. The Republicans are pushing to deliver final legislation to Trump before Christmas as the first major legislative accomplishment of his presidency.

At the White House, Trump was eager to receive it. "The cynical voices that opposed tax cuts grow smaller and weaker, and the American people grow stronger," he said. "This is for people of middle income, this is for companies that are going to create jobs. This is for very, very special people, the great people of America."

The business tax cuts would be permanent, but reductions for individuals would expire after a decade — saving money to comply with Senate budget rules. In all, the bill would cut taxes by about \$1.5 trillion during the next 10 years, adding billions of dollars to the nation's mounting debt.

The legislation, still being finalized, would cut the top tax rate for the wealthiest earners — Trump among them — from 39.6 percent to 37 percent, would slash the corporate income tax rate from 35 percent to 21 percent and would allow homeowners to deduct interest only on the first \$750,000 of a new mortgage.

The top tax rate currently applies to income above \$470,000 for married couples, though lawmakers are reworking the tax brackets.

The standard deduction would be nearly doubled, to \$24,000 for married couples.

Details of the agreement were described by Republican senators and congressional aides. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to discuss private negotiations publicly.

Republicans view passage of the legislation as a political im-

**Bill leads Pence to delay trip to Mideast**

*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Vice President Mike Pence plans to delay his weekend departure for the Middle East as Congress nears completion of a tax over-haul, White House officials said Thursday.

White House officials said Pence now plans to leave for Egypt on Tuesday so he can preside over the Senate during a vote on the tax package.

Pence had been scheduled to leave Saturday for Israel, following President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital. White House officials said Pence will travel first to Egypt and then to Israel.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorized to publicly describe scheduling details.

The officials said Pence's trip will be abbreviated after Palestinian officials and leading Muslim and Christian clerics in Egypt refused to meet with him during his trip to the region.

perative, proving to voters they can govern as the GOP fights to hold onto its majorities in the House and the Senate in next year's elections. Republicans say they expect the package to increase economic growth, generating additional tax revenue and lessening the hit to the budget deficit. Independent economists aren't as optimistic.

Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen said Wednesday that she and her Fed colleagues, who set interest rate policy, expect a "modest lift" to economic growth from the tax package.

Negotiators have removed several controversial provisions from the tax bill, including one that would have eliminated the deduction for interest on student loans and another deduction for medical expenses, said two congressional aides. Also, the bill no longer would start taxing graduate-school tuition waivers, the aides said.

## NATION

# Tavis Smiley talk show suspended by PBS amid misconduct allegations

BY SAMANTHA SCHMIDT  
*The Washington Post*

PBS is "indefinitely" suspending distribution of the late-night talk show "Tavis Smiley" after multiple misconduct allegations emerged against the show's host, PBS announced Wednesday.

While a statement from a PBS spokeswoman did not say what sort of misconduct was alleged, PBS News Hour, on its website, said the allegations involved "sexual misconduct."

"PBS engaged an outside law firm to conduct an investigation immediately after learning of troubling allegations regarding Mr. Smiley," a PBS spokesperson said.

"This investigation included interviews with witnesses as well as with Mr. Smiley."

The inquiry uncovered multiple, credible allegations of conduct that is inconsistent with the values and standards of PBS, and the totality of this information led to today's decision."

The news first was reported by Variety on Wednesday afternoon.



**Smiley**

The "Tavis Smiley" show is produced by independent production company TS Media. While PBS has been airing the series since 2004, it does not employ Smiley or his staff.

Smiley, 53, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The probe revealed allegations that Smiley had engaged in sexual relationships with multiple subordinates, Variety reported, citing unnamed sources.

Some witnesses "expressed concern that their employment status was linked to the status of a sexual relationship with Smiley," Variety reported. They described the long-time TV personality as creating a "verbally abusive and threatening environment" and raised concerns about retaliation, according to Variety.

"Tavis Smiley" is a 30-minute news show that airs weeknights and is filmed in Los Angeles. It features interviews with politicians, celebrities, athletes, and other high-profile guests.

Smiley was in the process of teaming up with J.J. Abrams' Bad Robot to develop a television adaptation of Smiley's book "Before You Judge Me: The Triumph and Tragedy of Michael Jackson's Last Days" for Warner Bros. Television.



RICHARD SHOTWELL, INVISION/AP

BY JAKE COYLE

*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — In one of the most vivid accounts yet among allegations of abuse and harassment

by Harvey Weinstein, Salma Hayek says the disgraced movie mogul turned the making of her 2002 passion project, the *Frida Kahlo* biopic "Frida," into a nightmare after the actress refused Weinstein's relentless advances.

"For years, he was my monster," Hayek wrote in an op-ed published Wednesday by The New York Times.

Hayek also wrote that he has been unfaithful to every wife and girlfriend I have ever had,"

Spurlock wrote that he will do better and will be more honest with others and with himself.

He ends the post by saying: "I've talked enough in my life ... I'm finally ready to listen."

Spurlock is best known for his Oscar-nominated 2004 documentary "Super Size Me" on the fast-food industry, in which he ate nothing but McDonald's food to show the health effects of the industry.

He has produced dozens of other documentaries and TV shows and completed a sequel to "Super Size Me" this year.

"I tried to comfort her. To make her feel better," Spurlock wrote.

"I thought I was doing ok, I believed she was feeling better. She believed she was raped. That's why I'm part of the problem."

Spurlock also said he paid a settlement to a female assistant who

worked at his office and whom he called "hot pants" or "sex pants."

In the post, he writes that she would tell everyone, "she was funny," he wrote. "Being who I was, it was the last thing I wanted, so of course, I paid."

Spurlock also wrote that he has been unfaithful to every wife and girlfriend I have ever had,"

Spurlock wrote that he will do better and will be more honest with others and with himself.

He ends the post by saying: "I've talked enough in my life ... I'm finally ready to listen."

When Hayek brought "Frida," which she was producing, to Miramax to distribute, Weinstein made outrageous demands as portrayed in her op-ed.

"Why do so many of us, as female artists, have to go to war to tell our stories when we have so much to offer? Why do we have to fight tooth and nail to maintain our dignity?" concluded Hayek in her op-ed.

"In her post, she says

## NATION

# Wildfire now 4th largest in Calif. history

Associated Press

SANTA BARBARA, Calif. — The coastal wildfire burning northwest of Los Angeles became the fourth largest in California history and authorities said it would likely keep growing and threatening communities as hot, gusty winds fanned the flames.

State officials said Thursday that the Thomas Fire straddling coastal Ventura and Santa Barbara counties covered 379 square miles. That surpassed a blaze that

burned inland Santa Barbara County a decade ago.

Some evacuations were lifted and the risk to the agricultural city of Fillmore was diminishing. But coastal enclaves to the west remained under threat as crews protected hillside homes in Montecito, Summerland and Carpinteria.

Schools were closed and many roads remained shut down. The USA Water Polo Women's National Team match against the Netherlands scheduled for Saturday in Santa Barbara was moved to Orange

County.

The National Weather Service said extreme fire danger conditions could last through the weekend due to lack of moisture along with a likely increase in wind speeds. Gusts were expected to top 35 mph by midday Thursday.

Firefighters made some progress Wednesday on corralling the fire, which continued to spread mostly into national forest land.

Since the blaze broke out on Dec. 4, it has burned destroyed 970 buildings — includ-

ing at least 700 homes. Flames threatened some 18,000 buildings and prompted evacuations of about 100,000 people. Covering more ground than the city of San Diego, it was 30 percent contained.

To the south in San Diego County, firefighters came very close to containing another major wildfire a week after it broke out.

That fire burned down 157 structures, most in its first hours. It also killed 46 race horses at a training center, and left one of their trainers with serious burns.

## Same-sex child support at issue in Hawaii case

BY JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER

Associated Press

HONOLULU — National gay rights advocates are watching how a child support fight between a divorced lesbian couple plays out in Hawaii, likely the first such case before a state Supreme Court, experts say.

A woman wants to sever her parental rights to a child her ex-wife gave birth to and is appealing a family court ruling denying that request to the Hawaii Supreme Court, which is set to hear arguments Thursday.

The couple, who are not identified in the confidential family court case, married in Washington, D.C., in 2013 and moved to Hawaii because of military orders for the woman seeking to end her parental rights.

Throughout the marriage, the couple talked about the possibility of having a child together, the court said. While the woman was deployed between January and September 2015, her wife got pregnant through a sperm donor. The woman filed for divorce in October 2015, and the child was born while it was pending.

The family court denied her petition because it found that Hawaii's Uniform Parentage Act and Marriage Equality Act presumes that a legal spouse of a woman who gives birth to a baby is the parent of that child, regardless of the spouse's gender.

"This is a very important and of-the-moment question in the LGBT community right now, which is how are states going to

treat parents of children where there are a same-sex marriage couple," said Cathy Sakimura, family law director for the National Center for Lesbian Rights, which is not involved in the case.

"Are they going to give them the same kind of recognition that any other couple would get or are they going to have a different rule applied to them?" Sakimura said.

There are a handful of similar cases nationwide, but the Hawaii dispute is likely the first involving a same-sex married couple with a child support case before a state's highest court, she said.

Most same-sex parental rights cases involve a spouse who didn't give birth to a child and wants custody, Sakimura said.

"It doesn't happen that often in the same-sex parenting world, but there are few cases where they are trying to avoid child support," she said.

In such cases, conception is a key question, Sakimura said.

"Did the spouse consent to the procedure and know about it? And that is what triggers them being a parent," she said.

The case will test marriage equality, said Lambda Legal, a prominent LGBT-rights group that is representing the woman who gave birth.

"This is unusual in that biology is being used as a shield to evade parental obligation," Lambda Legal attorney Peter Renn said. "Equal rights come with equal responsibility."



AP

Omarosa Manigault Newman, left, a former "Apprentice" contestant who became one of Donald Trump's most prominent black supporters, will leave her White House job.

## Omarosa: I resigned from White House job, not fired

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Former "Apprentice" star Omarosa Manigault Newman denies she was fired from her job at the White House — and she's teasing that she has stories to tell about what she's seen and heard there.

In an interview Thursday with ABC's "Good Morning America," Manigault Newman also said reports that she made a scene while being escorted from the White House grounds this week are "100 percent false," and questioned why no photos or video of the alleged ruckus had surfaced.

She said she resigned after a conversation with White House chief of staff John Kelly about some of her concerns. Her White House pass has been cut off, according to the Secret Service, although she will remain on the staff through the administration's one-year mark.

"John Kelly and I had a very straightforward discussion about concerns that I had, issues that I raised and, as a result, I resigned and it will be taking place Jan. 20, when I leave this very interesting administration," Manigault Newman said.

She also denied reports that she tried to enter the White House residence to see President Donald Trump, calling those reports "ridiculous" and "absurd."

The outgoing presidential adviser aluded to seeing and hearing things during her 11 months in the White House that

made her unhappy and uncomfortable. She declined to elaborate, citing her continued employment by the White House.

"But when I have a chance to tell my story ... quite a story to tell, as the only African-American woman in this White House, as a senior staff and assistant to the president, I have seen things that have made me uncomfortable, that have upset me, that have affected me deeply and emotionally, that has affected my community and my people," she said. "And when I can tell my story, it is a profound story that I know the world will want to hear."

One of Trump's most prominent black supporters, Manigault Newman was an assistant to the president and director of communications for the White House Office of Public Liaison, working on outreach to various constituency groups. But the office languished under her watch and Kelly had indicated that changes were forthcoming — including her dismissal, according to two White House officials who insisted on anonymity to discuss personnel matters because they were not authorized to speak publicly about them. Better known by only her first name, Manigault Newman was escorted from the White House complex Tuesday night but was allowed to offer her resignation, according to the two officials.

Trump bid her farewell in a tweet late Wednesday. "Thank you Omarosa for your service! I wish you continued success."

## Fertility doctor to admit using own sperm

Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — A retired Indiana fertility doctor accused of inseminating patients with his own sperm is set to plead guilty to charges that he lied to investigators.

Dr. Donald Cline, 79, is scheduled to appear Thursday afternoon in a Marion County court, when a judge is expected to sentence him on two counts of obstruction of justice. The charge carries a sentence of six months to three years in prison.

Some of the now-adult children of Cline's former patients filed a complaint with the Indiana attorney general's office in 2014 after they became suspicious that Cline had inseminated some of his patients with his own sperm.

Cline, who retired in 2009, initially wrote to investigators denying the allegations.

Paternity tests indicate Cline is likely the biological father of at least two of his

patients' children, according to court records. Those children allege that online genetic tests show he may be the father of 20 others.

According to prosecutors, Cline told six adults who believed they were his children that he had donated his own sperm about 50 times starting in the 1970s, according to court documents when he was charged last year. He had told his patients they were receiving sperm from medical or dental residents or medical students and that no single donor's sperm was used more than three times.

No other charges were filed against Cline because Indiana doesn't specifically prohibit fertility doctors from using their own sperm.

A prominent instance in which a fertility doctor secretly used his own sperm was Cecil Jacobson, who may have fathered as many as 70 children from 1976 to 1998 in Vienna, Va.

## NATION

# Rep. Farenthold to retire amid harassment claims

By ALAN FRAM  
AND WILL WEISSELT  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Texas Republican Rep. Blake Farenthold won't seek re-election next year; two Republicans said Thursday, adding his name to the list of lawmakers leaving Congress amid sexual harassment allegations that have cost powerful men their jobs in politics, the arts and other businesses.

The accusations against Farenthold first surfaced in 2014, when a former aide sued him over sexually suggestive comments and behavior and said she'd been fired after she complained. The lawmaker said he engaged in no wrongdoing and the case was settled in 2015.

But the House Ethics Committee said last week that it would investigate Farenthold after congressional sources said he'd paid an \$84,000 settlement using taxpayers' money. Though Farenthold said he'd reimburse the Treasury Department, such payments have drawn public criticism from people saying lawmakers should use their own money for such settlements.

A House official said Farenthold spoke twice Wednesday to House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., while another official said the congressman spoke once with Rep. Steve Stivers, R-Ohio, who heads the GOP's House campaign committee. Those discussions suggested that Farenthold may have come under pressure

from leaders to step aside. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity to describe private conversations.

Last week, three lawmakers facing accusations of sexual harassment announced their resignations. Reps. John Conyers, D-Mich., and Trent Franks, R-Ariz., already have left Congress while Sen. Al Franken, D-Minn., has said he will step aside soon.

Mike Bergsma, Republican county chairman in Farenthold's home county of Nueces, Texas, said Farenthold campaign manager Joseph Walter told him he will not seek re-election. Walter told Bergsma the staff was working on a media statement.

"I think it's a shame. He's my friend; I think he's been a good



JOSE LUIS MAGANA/AP

**House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., left, and Rep. Blake Farenthold, R-Texas, second from right, participate in a mock swearing-in ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington in January.**

congressman. I wish he had been able to tell his side of the story and that this one issue wasn't making so much difference," Bergsma said.

"I don't think he had done anything that devastating, and the thing that's really hurting him is that it was public money," Bergsma said, referring to the

use of Treasury money to pay the settlement.

"And the way the law is structured, my understanding is, he didn't have much choice."

A second Republican who confirmed Farenthold's retirement spoke on condition of anonymity to describe a decision the lawmaker had not yet made public.

## Official: Puerto Rico won't have full power until late May

By CHRISTOPHER FLAVELLE  
*Bloomberg News*

WASHINGTON — Puerto Rico's electrical grid is unlikely to be fully restored until the end of May, the head of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said Wednesday — months longer than the timeline offered by the island's governor.

Lt. Gen. Todd Semonite, commanding general and chief engineer for the Corps, said in an interview Wednesday that he expects Puerto Rico's electrical grid to reach 75 percent of customers by the end of January, 95 percent by the end of February, and 100 percent by the end of May, more than eight months after Hurricane Maria hit.

That departs from statements by Puerto Rico Gov. Ricardo Rossello, who said in

October that he hoped power would be restored to 95 percent of the grid by Dec. 15. The Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority made a similar pledge last month, saying it would reach 95 percent of customers by the end of December.

The slow pace of restoring electricity following Hurricane Maria has become shorthand for the U.S. government's uneven response. Just 61 percent of electricity had been restored as of Wednesday, according to data on a website run by the island's government.

Semonite said he had told Rossello on Oct. 27 that the Dec. 15 timeline was unrealistic. "Governor, there's no way you're going to get 95 percent" by that point, Semonite recounted telling Rossello. "And he was very, very upset."

## Judges to examine whether drug stash-house stings racially biased

By MICHAEL TARM  
*Associated Press*

CHICAGO — The question of whether federal agents display racial bias by staging phony drug stash-house stings overwhelmingly in black neighborhoods is the focus of hearings beginning Thursday in Chicago and could determine whether agencies curtail or even abandon their use nationwide.

A first-of-its-kind panel of federal trial judges holds two days of hearings on the stings, which are overseen by the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and typically involve agents posing as cartel couriers who talk suspects into agreeing to rob drugs that don't exist from what they are told are guarded stash houses that are also fictitious.

The nine panelists — each of whom presides over 12 separate stash-house cases with 43 defendants in all — chose to hear evidence simultaneously on the question

after defense teams in the dozen cases all moved for the indictments to be tossed on grounds of racial bias.

How the judges rule in coming weeks — and they could submit a single ruling — is expected to influence how courts around the country deal with similar claims about the stings, which have been a favorite tool of federal law enforcement dating to the 1990s. Rulings in Chicago also could encourage the U.S. Supreme Court to take up the issue.

Stash-house stings have been criticized on other grounds, including in how agents dangle the prospect of pocketing tens of thousands of dollars to often poor, desperate subjects. Some courts have warned the stings risk crossing the line into illegally entrapping suspects.

Authorities insist they're careful not to entrap anyone, targeting only those with records of violent crimes and who say unequivocally they want in on armed robberies.



**The Walt Disney Co. logo appears on a screen above the floor of the New York Stock Exchange in August.**

## Disney buying large part of 21st Century Fox for \$52.4B

By TALI ARBEL  
*Associated Press*

NEW YORK — Disney is buying the Murdoch family's Fox movie and television studios and some cable and international TV businesses for about \$52.4 billion, as the home of Mickey Mouse tries to meet competition from technology companies in the entertainment business.

Disney's all-stock deal for 21st Century Fox gives it the studios that produce the Avatar movies, "The Simpsons" and "Modern Family," though Murdoch will keep the Fox sports stations. The deal also brings Marvel characters such as X-Men and The Avengers under one roof — Disney's.

In owning these properties, Disney will be in a better position to compete with the likes of Netflix when it launches ESPN+

and Disney-branded streaming services in the coming years.

That Rupert Murdoch and his sons were willing to sell off much of the business that has been built up over decades came as a shock to the entertainment industry.

Murdoch, who built a global media and entertainment empire out of an inheritance from his father in Australia, said what remains of his family's business will be able to focus on American news and sports. During a call with investors Thursday, Murdoch describes the move as a return to the company's "core, aggressive roots."

Disney CEO Robert Iger will continue as chairman and CEO of The Walt Disney Co. through the end of 2021. Disney said Thursday that it anticipates the acquisition will provide at least \$2 billion in cost savings. Both companies' boards have approved the deal. It still needs approval from Disney and 21st Century Fox shareholders.

## NATION



HYOSUB SHIN, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/AP

**Votes get another look**

Ralph Jones, registration manager, and other workers recount the votes cast in the Dec. 5 Atlanta mayoral election runoff at the Fulton County Elections Preparation Center on Thursday. DeKalb and Fulton counties certified their election results Monday. Candidate Mary Norwood asked for a recount after results showed her opponent, Keisha Lance Bottoms, winning by less than 1 percent of the vote.

**Dems say Trump to seek pay freeze, cuts to security**

By JOE DAVIDSON  
*The Washington Post*

**WASHINGTON** — President Donald Trump will propose a pay freeze for federal employees and cut domestic security programs in fiscal 2019, according to reports released by Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Democrats.

The two reports are based on budget guidance from the Office of Management and Budget, dated Nov. 28, overruling Department of Homeland Security requests. The guidance was leaked to the panel's Democratic staff by a whistleblower. Sen. Claire McCaskill, of Missouri, the committee's top Democrat, had the staff issue summaries of the OMB document. One report focuses on personnel, the other on counterterrorism programs.

Although the budget documents concern DHS, the personnel summary says "OMB intends to issue a pay freeze for federal civilian employees in 2019." Quoting the administration's

document, the staff report adds: "OMB has instructed DHS: 'Per governmentwide guidance, no civilian pay raise is included in the recommended level for the FY 2019 Budget.'"

The counterterrorism report says the administration "intends to seek \$568 million in cuts to counterterrorism programs" from 2017 levels. That would include decreases in programs on violent extremism, port and public transportation security, domestic nuclear detection and emergency management grants.

According to the staff report, OMB wants to eliminate Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response teams, which "are multidisciplinary groups of security officers deployed to various locations to prevent and deter acts of terrorism" and cut \$27 million from Federal Air Marshals.

"I'm worried that the Office of Management and Budget is overriding what local, state, and national leaders have told me they most need to keep us safe," McCaskill said. "With recent ter-

rorist attacks in our country and throughout the globe, counterterrorism programs shouldn't be on the chopping block."

The staff noted that OMB's budget guidance does not necessarily represent the administration's final spending plan. Agencies can appeal budget office guidance. The DHS appeal was due Dec. 1.

Federal employees had a three-year freeze on their basic pay rates during the Obama administration. Another freeze "may present challenges for DHS components wishing to retain qualified employees. Morale and attrition within DHS have long been problems that the Department has struggled to fix," the staff report said.

"The absence of a pay increase for law enforcement personnel may not allow DHS to remain competitive with other law enforcement agencies with whom they compete for qualified applicants. This is especially true as DHS components have historically struggled to meet hiring mandates."

**Probe brings change in policy on suicidal vets**

By NIKKI WENTLING  
*Stars and Stripes*

**WASHINGTON** — The Department of Veterans Affairs is implementing a new agency-wide policy to flag medical records of patients at high risk of suicide within 24 hours of a decision made following whistleblower allegations last year that a VA suicide-prevention team in Albuquerque, N.M., was being negligent of suicidal veterans.

According to the Office of Special Counsel, the VA is also in the process of clarifying rules to follow when handling suicidal veterans, and it's establishing new employee training and improving communication between VA facilities about veterans at risk for suicide.

The Office of Special Counsel initiated an investigation last year following complaints from an unnamed employee at the Raymond G. Murphy VA Medical Center in Albuquerque. The special counsel discovered the VA facility was failing to flag medical records for veterans at risk of suicide.

In a letter to President Donald Trump, special counsel Harry Kerner announced the case closed Nov. 30 and the original whistleblower complaints, as well as correspondence between the special counsel and the VA, were publicly released.

Kerner wrote to Trump that the VA was initially slow to take action.

The investigation started in April 2016. Among other findings, it uncovered that providers weren't updating the VA's "High Risk for Suicide" list or flagging patient medical records in a timely manner. The flagging system is intended to inform VA doctors nationwide when a patient might be at risk for suicide.

It was also discovered the hospital's suicide-prevention coordinator didn't perform evaluations every 90 days for some veterans who were flagged for suicide risk, as the VA requires. In some cases, the Veterans Crisis Line referred veterans to the hospital's suicide-prevention team and their responses were delayed. In

“The agency initially appeared slow in recognizing the tragedy that suicide by veterans represents.”

Harry Kerner

Office of Special Counsel, in a letter to President Donald Trump about the VA

one instance, it took eight business days for the coordinator to contact a veteran referred from the hotline.

The VA's initial response to the findings were "disappointing," Kerner wrote. The VA responded it didn't have a policy in place to flag patient records for suicide risk within a certain timeframe and it didn't substantiate many of the whistleblower claims.

"The agency initially appeared slow in recognizing the tragedy that suicide by veterans represents, seemingly implying that certain delays in care and a lack of adequate regulations governing the handling of suicidal veterans were tolerable," he wrote. "As seen from the agency reports, a lack of requirements leads to delays and delays lead to veteran deaths."

After going back-and-forth with the VA since February, Kerner determined the agency's response was now "reasonable."

Besides implementing the 24-hour rule, the agency is adding staff to the suicide-prevention team in Albuquerque, the Albuquerque Journal reported. The newspaper reported the suicide-prevention coordinator criticized by the unnamed whistleblower kept her position.

"Ultimately ... I have determined that the reports contain all of the information required by statute, and the findings appear reasonable," Kerner wrote to Trump. "This matter is now closed."

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**Judge: Octogenarian doctor lacking computer skills can't regain license**

By MICHAEL CASEY  
*Associated Press*

**CONCORD, N.H.** — A New Hampshire judge has upheld his decision to deny an 84-year-old doctor's request to regain her license to practice, which she had surrendered partly over her inability to use a computer.

The state challenged Dr. Anna Konopka's record keeping, prescribing practices and medical decision making. It said her limited computer skills prevent her from using the state's mandatory electronic drug monitoring program, which requires prescribers of opioids to register in an effort

reduce overdoses.

Judge John Kissinger ruled last month that Konopka failed to show she was forced to give up her license as she alleged.

In his order released Wednesday, Kissinger said Konopka failed to show that the state Board of Medicine "acted unreasonably

or improperly."

"I'm not giving up yet," Konopka said. "I will keep fighting until it's pointless. Then I will accept that."

In her defense, Konopka submitted letters from nearly 30 patients who praised her patience, passion and medical skills. Many

of her patients lack insurance, but she takes anyone willing to pay her \$50 in cash.

"This court system is leaving all of us high and dry," said Cheryl Hodgdon, 55, one of Konopka's patients. "I have waited two months to get another appointment at another pain clinic."

# AMERICAN ROUNDUP

## **Police: Man strips, jumps on car after crash**

**V**A FAIRFAX — Fairfax County police said a man stripped off his clothes and jumped on a passing vehicle after a car accident near Washington Dulles International Airport.

A statement from the Fairfax County Police Department said the bizarre incident occurred Tuesday and caused "major traffic delays" during rush hour around the airport.

The man, who was not immediately identified, is facing multiple charges.

Officials said the naked suspect was found on Dulles airport property after fleeing the accident scene. He was taken to the hospital with minor injuries.

## **'Christmas Story' house may become Lego set**

**N**Y SYRACUSE — A central New York family is campaigning for their carefully crafted recreation of the house from "A Christmas Story" to become an official Lego set.

WSTM-TV in Syracuse reported Jason Middaugh's small family project to recreate the house from the classic holiday film turned into a six-month undertaking. Middaugh said he and his family, who live in Marcellus, scoured the internet to find the 2,000 pieces needed to construct the home.

Lego reviews set proposals when 10,000 people support a project on their special site. The Middaugh family's "A Christmas Story" set has received nearly 9,000 endorsements. The real home from the movie is in Cleveland.

## **Hero dog credited with saving owner from fire**

**L**A BOUTTE — A Louisiana man said he escaped a catastrophic fire only thanks to the action of his dog.

Calvin Baldwin told WVUE-TV that his dog, Rusty, stood on the end of a sofa and started scratching Baldwin's arm to wake him up during the Sunday morning fire at his home in Boutte. Baldwin said he awoke to see smoke, grabbed Rusty and left the house.

The fire left the inside of the home charred and the roof partially collapsed.

Baldwin said all his personal belongings in the house he had shared with his late wife have been destroyed.

## **Episcopal priest to get probation for road rage**

**F**L STUART — The rector of an Episcopal church in North Carolina accused of pointing a gun at another vehicle in Florida is set to receive a year of probation.

The Palm Beach Post reported Tuesday that Martin County prosecutors reached a deal with the Rev. William Rian Adams, 35. He is scheduled to plead no contest Friday to a misdemeanor charge of improper exhibition of a firearm. He had been facing



PHOTOS BY ANDY NEWMAN, FLORIDA KEYS NEWS BUREAU/AP

## **Grinch on patrol**

Monroe County Sheriff's Office Col. Lou Caputo, above left, has some fun with Deputy Willie Guerra as he aims a radar speed gun in a school zone on the Florida Keys Overseas Highway in Marathon, Fla. During the holiday season, Caputo dresses as the Grinch to provide motorists who slightly speed in the zone the option of a traffic citation or an onion, right.

two felony counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon.

State troopers said a pickup driver was closely following Adams' Corvette on Florida's Turnpike in July and tried to pass the car. Authorities say Adams pointed a handgun at the truck.

## **Rare barn owls hatch late brood of chicks**

**I**N BEDFORD — A pair of rare barn owls is tending to an unusually late brood of chicks in their southern Indiana nest that's outfitted with a webcam.

The Department of Natural Resources said the mother owl laid a second clutch of eggs in late September, which is quite late in the nesting season.

DNR staffers recently inspected the nest and found three healthy chicks and two much smaller chicks.

DNR nongame bird biologist Allyson Gillet said the healthy chicks will likely survive until fledging if they find sufficient food in the coming weeks.

Barn owls have a distinctive, heart-shaped face and are so-named because they often build their nests in barns. They are an endangered species in Indiana.

## **Chunk of ice falls on home, tears roof**

**C**A RIVERSIDE — San Bernardino homeowners say a block of ice fell out of the sky, tore through their roof and landed in their bedroom.

The Press-Enterprise reported Claudell Curry and Odell Marie Curry said their home shook violently as a chunk of ice the size of a car engine fell into their home last weekend.

The couple is thankful they did not go to bed before the ice fell.

Last month, a chunk of ice fell into a home in Chino, 25 miles west of San Bernardino, also damaging the roof.

Federal Aviation Administration spokesman Ian Gregor believes the ice that fell onto Chino home could have formed on the outside of a passenger airliner.

## **Officials rescue birds from farmstead**

**I**A IOWA CITY — Iowa City Animal Services say more than 200 birds were rescued following a large-scale animal welfare investigation on an abandoned farmstead in eastern Iowa.

The Press-Citizen reported that animal services is now caring for 110 ducks and geese, 76 chickens and 49 pigeons.

Johnson County Sheriff Lonny Pulkrabek said an investigation at an abandoned farmstead southeast of Solon turned up more than 20 crates, kennels and small sheds on the land containing hundreds of birds.

Pulkrabek said the 70-year-old owner of the property admitted to owning the birds and voluntarily relinquished them.

## **Christmas tree planted in sinkhole in road**

**M**S JACKSON — There's only one thing under the Christmas tree decorating Poplar Boulevard in Jackson — a pothole that residents hope will get fixed soon.

WLBT-TV reported somebody placed a tree fully decorated with ornaments and lights in the sinkhole that appeared weeks earlier in the Belhaven neighborhood.

A sign on the tree says: "From our sinkhole to yours."

Resident Kelsey Berry said the pothole posed a hazard to unsuspecting motorists because the street isn't lit very well.

The tree's lights turn on at night

to help warn drivers to swerve around it.

## **Jail guard catches man falling from 2nd story**

**N**V PAHRUMP — Two sheriff's deputies were credited Tuesday with preventing a man from suffering serious injuries when he let himself fall backward from a second-story rail in what officials called an apparent suicide attempt last week inside a Nevada county jail.

Neither the inmate nor the deputy who caught him, Joshua Armendariz, were seriously hurt in the Dec. 5 incident inside the Nye County Detention Center in Pahrump, sheriff's Lt. David Boruchowitz said.

Boruchowitz said another jail deputy, Ann Horak, tried to prevent the man from falling.

The inmate was identified as a Las Vegas resident in his mid-20s who Boruchowitz said was arrested Sept. 24 and threatened suicide while serving a 90-day sentence for convictions on speeding, driving without a valid license and failure to provide proof of insurance charges.

From wire reports

## WORLD

# Aid group: At least 6,700 Rohingya killed in Myanmar

Associated Press

BANGKOK — International aid group Doctors Without Borders said its field survey has found at least 6,700 Rohingya Muslims were killed between August and September in a crackdown by Myanmar's security forces.

The group, known by its French acronym MSF, said in a statement made available Thursday that it conducted the survey in refugee camps in Bangladesh. It estimated that at least 9,000 Rohingya had died of various causes in Myanmar's Rakhine state between Aug. 25 and Sept. 24, and that more than 70 percent of the deaths were the result of violence.

According to MSF, the dead included at least 730 children younger than 5.

More than 630,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Buddhist-majority Myanmar into Bangladesh to escape what the United Nations has called "ethnic cleansing."

"The peak in deaths coincides with the launch of the latest 'clearance operations' by Myanmar security forces in the last week of August," MSF medical director Sidney Wong said in a statement.

She said the findings were staggering, both in terms of the numbers of people who reported family members dead as a result of violence and the horrific ways in which they said they were killed or severely injured.

MSF said that among children younger than 5, more than 59 percent who were killed during that period reportedly were shot, 15

percent burned to death in their homes, 7 percent were beaten to death and 2 percent died due to land mine blasts.

Myanmar's Information Ministry has said that 400 people died following attacks by a militant Rohingya group on police posts on Aug. 25. It said most of the 400 were "extremist terrorists" who died during military "clearance operations."

International aid and rights groups have accused the military of arson, killings and rapes of Rohingya villagers. Myanmar authorities have blamed Rohingya militants for the violence.

More than 1 million ethnic Rohingya Muslims have lived in Myanmar for generations. They have been stripped of their citizenship, denied almost all rights



DAR YASIN/AP

Rohingya Muslims who crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh wait to receive aid in September near the Balukhali refugee camp in Bangladesh. About 630,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh to escape what the United Nations has called "ethnic cleansing."

and labeled stateless.

Since Myanmar's military conducted operations against the Rohingya in Rakhine state, the civilian government has barred most journalists, international observers and humanitarian aid workers from traveling to the re-

gion independently.

MSF said the number of deaths is likely to be an underestimation, "as we have not surveyed all refugee resettlements in Bangladesh and because the surveys don't account for the families who never made it out of Myanmar."

## Suicide bomber kills 17 at Somalia police academy

By ABDI GULED

Associated Press

MOGADISHU, Somalia — An Islamic extremist suicide bomber disguised as a police officer killed at least 17 and injured 20 at a police academy in Somalia's capital on Thursday, police said.

Col. Mohamud Aden said that 20 other officers were wounded by the blast, some of them seriously.

The bomber, with explosives strapped around his waist and torso, infiltrated Gen. Kahie Police Academy and targeted officers gathering for special morning exercises, Capt. Mohamed Hussein said. The officers were rehearsing for Somalia's Police Day celebrations scheduled for Dec. 20, Hussein said.

The bomber walked into the police academy undetected and joined a long line of officers in the rehearsal parade before he detonated the explosives under his sportswear, Hussein said.

"He detonated his bomb vest having realized that his presence had drawn suspicion among officers in the queue," he said.

Policeman Farah Omar, who was at the scene at the time of the blast, said the bomber targeted a spot where dozens of soldiers had gathered.

"He wanted to inflict a maximum damage," said Omar.

The Somalia-based al-Shabab extremist group quickly claimed responsibility for the attack. Al-Shabab, which is allied to al-Qaida, carries out frequent bombings and attacks against hotels, checkpoints and other high-profile areas of Mogadishu.

Al-Shabab has become the deadliest Islamic extremist group in Africa and is increasingly targeted by the U.S. military after the Trump administration early this year approved expanded airstrikes and other efforts against the fighters.

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## WORLD

# Putin: Collusion claims invented by Trump foes

Associated Press

MOSCOW — Russian President Vladimir Putin on Thursday scoffed at allegations of collusion between U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign and Russia, saying they have been "invented" by Trump's foes and have hurt the U.S. political system.

He also mocked his critic, Alexei Navalny, who is barred from challenging Putin in the March 18 vote by an embezzlement conviction, saying those like him want to plunge Russia into a destabilized quagmire. He vowed not to let that happen.

Speaking at his annual marathon news conference, Putin reaffirmed his firm denial of meddling in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

"All of it was invented by people who oppose President Trump to undermine his legitimacy," he said. "I'm puzzled by that. People who do it are inflicting damage to the domestic political situation, incapacitating the president and showing a lack of respect to voters who cast their ballots for him."

He argued that Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak, whose contacts with Trump's entourage are part of the U.S. congressional probes into ties between the Trump campaign and Russia, was simply performing his routine duties.

Putin also insisted Russia's state-funded RT TV and Sputnik news agency had a very minor presence in the U.S. media market, adding that the U.S. demand for them to register as foreign agents represented an attack on media freedom.

Putin has warned the U.S. not to use force against North Korea, adding that the consequences will be "catastrophic." He emphasized that Russia opposes Pyongyang's nuclear bid, but added that U.S. had "provoked" Pyongyang into developing its nuclear and missile programs by spiking a 2005 deal under which North Korea agreed to halt them. Putin said Moscow was encouraged



PAVEL GOLOVKIN/AP

**During his annual news conference, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he will focus on making Russia's economy more flexible if he's re-elected.**

to hear U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's statement about readiness for talks with Pyongyang, halting it as a "realistic" approach.

The Russian leader also voiced concern about the U.S. considering a pullout from key nuclear arms control pacts, adding that Moscow intends to stick to them.

He said he would welcome political competition but insisted that the opposition should offer a positive program. Answering a question from celebrity TV host Ksenia Sobchak, 36, who is challenging him in the March 18 presidential election, Putin said Thursday that he doesn't fear political competition but emphasized that the government would protect the country from attempts by radicals to destabilize Russia.

Asked about accusations of state-supported doping that led to Russia being banned from the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea, Putin alleged that there is a political element behind the claims, which Russia has denied.

## Italian agents close in on fugitive Mafia boss

Associated Press

MILAN — Italian law enforcement is closing in on Italy's most wanted mafioso fugitive, executing dozens of search warrants on known associates of Matteo Messina Denaro.

The news agency ANSA said that 200 agents on Thursday were searching the homes and businesses of some 30 mafiosi in the Trapani area of western Sicily. All

are under investigation for aiding Denaro's flight.

Denaro, a fugitive since 1993, is considered a possible successor to the "boss of bosses" Salvatore "Toto" Riina, who died last month while serving 26 life sentences.

The sting was the latest move to root out Denaro, 55, who has long evaded arrest for his role in the bombing assassination of magistrates in the 1990s as well as other Mafia hits and crimes.

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Christmas gifts.  
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one more thing. Christmas  
is my best holiday ever.  
Love, [Signature]

Dear Santa,  
Is Santa my favorite? I am  
an American girl with 2 Monster High  
staff, 7 friends, 4 dogs,  
Marionette 218, 5 plants, 2 zombies,  
6 ELF ON THE SHELF.  
  
I also have 2 Barbies, 2  
pillow pets (one is a cat and one is a dog).  
  
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Love, Vienna  
your elf

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## BUSINESS/WEATHER

# What is net neutrality and why does it matter?

Associated Press

**NEW YORK** — Net neutrality regulations, designed to prevent internet service providers like Verizon, AT&T, Comcast and Charter from favoring some sites and apps over others, are on the chopping block. On Thursday, the Federal Communications Commission voted to undo the Obama-era rules that have been in place since 2015 and forbid states to put anything similar in place.

FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, a Republican who said his plan to repeal net neutrality will eliminate unnecessary regulation, called the internet the "greatest free-market innovation in history." He added that it "certainly wasn't heavy-handed government regulation" that's been responsible for the internet's "phenomenal" development.

"What is the FCC doing today?" he asked. "Quite simply, we are restoring the light-touch framework that has governed the internet for most of its existence."

Here's a look at what the developments mean for consumers and companies.

Net neutrality is the principle that internet providers treat all web traffic equally, and it's pretty much how the internet has worked



ANDREW HARNIK/AP

The Federal Communications Commission is set to vote on a proposal that would undo Obama-era "net neutrality" rules and forbid states from putting anything similar in place.

since its creation.

But regulators, consumer advocates and internet companies were concerned about what broadband companies could do with their power as the pathway to the internet — blocking or slowing down apps that rival their own services, for example.

The FCC in 2015 approved rules, on a party-line vote, that made sure cable and phone companies don't manipulate traffic.

With them in place, a provider such as Comcast can't charge Netflix for a faster path to its customers, or block it or slow it down.

The net neutrality rules gave the FCC power to go after companies for business practices that weren't explicitly banned as well. For example, the Obama FCC said that "zero rating" practices by AT&T violated net neutrality.

The telecom giant exempted its own video app from cellphone

data caps, which would save some consumers money, and said video rivals could pay for the same treatment. Pai's FCC spiked the effort to go after AT&T, even before it began rolling out a plan to undo the net neutrality rules entirely.

A federal appeals court upheld the rules in 2016 after broadband providers sued.

Big telecom companies hate the stricter regulation that comes with the net neutrality rules and have fought them fiercely in court.

They say the regulations can undermine investment in broadband and introduced uncertainty about what were acceptable business practices. There were concerns about potential price regulation, even though the FCC had said it won't set prices for consumer internet service.

Internet companies such as Google have strongly backed net neutrality, but many tech firms have been more muted in their activism this year. Netflix, which had been vocal in support of the rules in 2015, said in January that weaker net neutrality wouldn't hurt it because it's now so popular with users for broadband providers to interfere.

In the long run, net-neutrality advocates say undoing these rules makes it harder for the govern-

ment to crack down on internet providers who act against consumer interests and will harm innovation. Those who criticize the rules say undoing them is good for investment in broadband networks.

But advocates aren't sitting still. Some groups plan lawsuits to challenge the FCC's move, and Democrats — energized by public protests in support of net neutrality — think it might be a winning political issue for them in 2018 congressional elections.

## EXCHANGE RATES

		Military rates
Euro costs (Dec. 15)	.....	\$1,2136
Dollar buys (Dec. 15)	.....	0.8240
Canadian (Dec. 15)	.....	0.83
Japanese yen (Dec. 15)	.....	110.00
South Korean won (Dec. 15)	.....	1,060.00
		Commercial rates
Bahrain (Dirham)	.....	0.3769
British pound	.....	1.3409
Canadian (Dollar)	.....	1.2857
Chinese (Yuan)	.....	0.2002
Denmark (Krone)	.....	6.3991
Egypt (Pound)	.....	17.8849
French (Franc)	.....	1,180.00
Hong Kong (Dollar)	.....	7.8909
Hungary (Forint)	.....	265.31
Italian (Lira)	.....	0.2326
Japan (Yen)	.....	112.68
Kuwait (Dinar)	.....	0.3018
Norway (Krone)	.....	8.2839
Poland (Zloty)	.....	5.65
Poland (Zloty)	.....	3.58
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	.....	3.7514
Swiss (Franc)	.....	1.1419
South Korea (Won)	.....	1,087.85
Sweden (Krona)	.....	0.9892
Thailand (Baht)	.....	32.51
Turkey (Lira)	.....	3.3746

(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities. Commercial rates are for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For example, the commercial rate for purchasing British pounds in Germany, check with your local military banking facility. Commercial bank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies converted to U.S. dollars, or dollars to pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)

## INTEREST RATES

Prime	.....	4.50
Discount rate	.....	2.00
Federal funds market rate	.....	1.17
3-month bill	.....	1.13
30-year bond	.....	2.73

## EUROPE GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	\$uper plus	Diesel
Germany	\$2.772	\$3.052	\$3.289	\$3.199
Change in price	-1.5 cents	-1.5 cents	-1.4 cents	-1.2 cents
Netherlands	—	\$3.400	\$3.549	\$3.494
Change in price	—	-6.0 cents	-6.0 cents	-6.8 cents
U.K.	—	\$2.997	\$3.234	\$3.144
Change in price	—	-1.5 cents	-1.4 cents	-1.2 cents
Azores	—	—	\$3.232	—
Change in price	—	—	-1.4 cents	—
Belgium	—	\$2.759	\$3.005	\$2.916
Change in price	—	No change	No change	No change
Turkey	—	—	\$3.110	—
Change in price	—	—	-1.4 cents	-1.2 cents
Italy	\$3.860	—	—	\$3.822
Change in price	No change	—	—	No change

## PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Unleaded	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel
Japan	\$3.029	—	—	\$2.939
Change in price	—	-2.0 cents	—	-2.0 cents
South Korea	\$2.519	—	—	\$2.939
Change in price	-1.0 cents	—	—	-2.0 cents
Guam	\$2.549	\$2.829	\$3.069	\$2.979
Change in price	-2.0 cents	-2.0 cents	-1.0 cents	-1.0 cents
Guam	\$2.549**	\$2.829	\$3.069	—
Change in price	-2.0 cents	-1.0 cents	-1.0 cents	—

\* Diesel EFD \*\* Midgrade  
For the week of Dec. 16-22

## MARKET WATCH

Dec. 13, 2017

Dow Jones industrials	80.63
Nasdaq composite	13.48
Standard & Poor's 500	-1.26
Russell 2000	8.33
	1,524.45

## WEATHER OUTLOOK

## FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



## FRIDAY IN EUROPE



## SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC

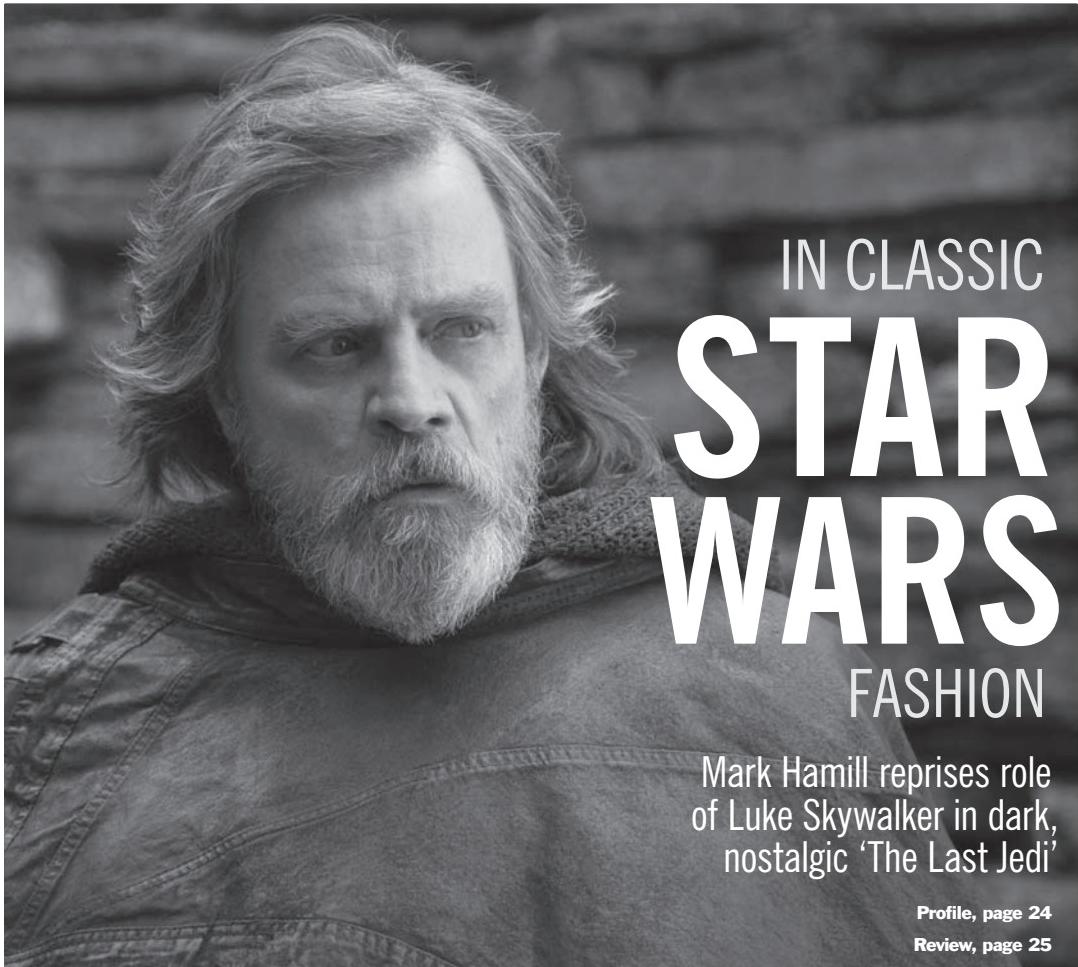


The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.

# WEEKEND



Chris Stapleton  
all about the music  
Page 36



## IN CLASSIC **STAR WARS** FASHION

Mark Hamill reprises role  
of Luke Skywalker in dark,  
nostalgic 'The Last Jedi'

Profile, page 24

Review, page 25



Travel — 27-34

Music — 36-37

Books — 38

Fitness — 40

Crossword — 42

# WEEKEND: GADGETS & CHARTS



CNET/TNS

The iPhone 8 (pictured) and iPhone X are water-resistant — an improvement on earlier models. Is a protective case also necessary?

## How much protection does a new iPhone need?

By JIM ROSSMAN

*The Dallas Morning News*

**N**ot long after buying a new iPhone 8 Plus, a friend posted on Facebook asking for a recommendation to fix the broken back glass after a drop.

I answered that since the iPhone 8 models had only been out a few weeks, she likely wouldn't find any independent shops offering to replace the back glass; no one but Apple would have the parts yet.

To include wireless charging, Apple changed the back of the iPhone 8 and 8 Plus to one made of glass. The iPhone 6 and 7 models had backs made of aluminum.

A day or two later, she told me Apple charged her a price of \$400 to fix it.

Yikes.

Phones like the Apple iPhone X or Samsung Galaxy Note 8 are marvels of engineering — using the latest in glass and metal — and their screens are bigger than ever.

With handset prices punching through the \$1,000 mark this year, I'm sure everyone who's shelled out big bucks is wondering if and how to protect their investment.

Should you keep that beautiful phone in a case? What about the screen? Does it need extra protection? How about an extended warranty?

**ON THE COVER:** Mark Hamill (main photo) gets more screen time as Luke Skywalker in "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."

LUCASFILM/AP

## ITUNES MUSIC

The top 10 songs on iTunes for the week ending Dec. 7:

1. "Perfect Duel" (with Beyoncé), Ed Sheeran
2. "Refuge," Ed Sheeran
3. "Him & I" G-Eazy & Halsey
4. "Rockstar" (feat. 21 Savage), Post Malone
5. "Havana" (feat. Young Thug), Camila Cabello
6. "Thunder," Imagine Dragons
7. "Meant to Be" (feat. Florida Georgia Line), Bebe Rexha
8. "Amazing Grace," Brooke Simpson
9. "Bad at Love," Halsey
10. "End Game" (feat. Ed Sheeran & Future), Taylor Swift

— Compiled by AP

## SPOTIFY MUSIC

The top 10 songs on Spotify through Dec. 12:

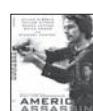
1. "Rockstar" (feat. 21 Savage), Post Malone
2. "Havana" (feat. Young Thug), Camila Cabello
3. "Waves," Selena Gomez
4. "New Rules," Dua Lipa
5. "Perfect Duel" (with Beyoncé), Ed Sheeran
6. "Let You Down," NF
7. "All I Want For Christmas Is You," Mariah Carey
8. "Too Good At Goodbyes," Sam Smith
9. "Perfect," Ed Sheeran
10. "Gucci Gang," Lil Pump

— Compiled by Stars and Stripes

## ITUNES MOVIES

The top 10 movies on iTunes for the week ending Dec. 10:

1. "American Assassin"
2. "Despicable Me 3"
3. "Elf" (2003)
4. "Atomic Blonde"
5. "Logan Lucky"
6. "Home Alone"
7. "Kingsman: The Golden Circle"
8. "The Hero"
9. "The Hitman's Bodyguard"
10. "Wind River"



— Compiled by AP

## APPS

The top paid iPhone apps for the week ending Dec. 10:

1. "Assassin's Creed," Ubisoft
2. "Fortnite," Epic Games
3. "Wolfenstein II: The New Colossus," Bethesda
4. "Destiny 2 Activation," Blizzard
5. "South Park: The Fractured But Whole," Ubisoft
6. "Horizon Zero Dawn: The Frozen Wilds," Sony Interactive Entertainment
7. "Call of Duty: WWII," Activision
8. "Hidden Agenda," Sony Interactive
9. "Life is Strange: Before the Storm," Square Enix
10. "Middle-earth: Shadow of War," Warner Bros.

— Compiled by AP

## GADGET WATCH

### Device makes bikes smart, cyclists safe

By GREGG ELLMAN

*Tribune News Service*

You'll ride the streets a lot safer with SmartHalo Technologies' new SmartHalo smart device for bicycles. It attaches to bikes with standard handlebars and pairs via Bluetooth with your smartphone. A HaloKey is included, which is a specialized anti-theft mechanism designed just for this device and used for locking it in place.

Inside is a rechargeable, 2,000 mAh Li-Polymer, which should be good for about three weeks of one-hour rides per day before a USB charge is needed. The SmartHalo is weather-proof and has LEDs circling the top, which are so smart they glow green when you should turn and red when you miss a turn. If you're wondering how it knows where to turn, that's where your smartphone comes into play. Before your ride, program your route.

For night riders, a front-facing light will certainly contribute to your safety. It's controlled automatically or with a touch of the top side of the display. Keeping it on automatic allows it to go on or off depending on the amount of light present. When you stop riding, the light goes off.

The app (iOS and Android) has many features to work with the device, including a "find my bike" feature in the event of theft or if you just forgot where you left it. There's also a compass, visual speedometer and an alarm, which deactivates when it senses your phone is close by.

The top of the SmartHalo has a tactile circular interface for a display you can easily read while riding and has a visual flashing light to alert you to calls and message notifications. Be sure to pull over before you check them out.

Online: smarthalo.bike, \$149

With help from the Perfect Blend 2.0, I made myself a smoothie for the first time recently.

The small scale combines with your own blender and the Perfect Blend recipe app (iOS and Android) to ensure you add each ingredient exactly right, measured by weight and displayed on your smartphone or tablet. The box says it works with any blender; it worked perfectly with both of mine.

Each recipe takes you step by step, making it easy, even for me. I even found out that the ingredients should be added in a specific order to ensure optimal blending.

Setup is as easy as downloading the app and pairing the Perfect Blend wirelessly (via Bluetooth). How advanced you want your drinks to be is up to you. It's not limited to healthy nutrition, as I found out. The scale works perfectly for baking and cocktail beverages.

For nutritious recipes, the app displays the number of calories and servings you're about to blend based on the ingredients and how much you add.

Two AAA batteries are required.

Online: makeitperfectly.com, \$33.91



SMARTHALO TECHNOLOGIES/TNS

The SmartHalo smart device for pedal bikers has a front-facing light and an alarm, and helps with directions if a route's been programmed.

The PIQ Robot sensor is designed for athletes to give them the tools they need to improve their performance levels.

The sensor works with an accessory dedicated to specific sports including golf, tennis, skiing, boxing or kiteboarding.

It's worn on a strap which links to your smartphone. On the PIQ app, it records and analyzes the analytics performance details of a workout session. This includes speed, G-force at impact and retraction time, then displays the analytics in real time on the app.

The app shows results on a community leaderboard to urge athletes to work harder to move up in the standings.

Online: pinq.com, \$149 for the sensor, accessories prices; boxing \$99, golf \$269, tennis \$178, kiteboarding \$205, ski \$198



A Star Wars collection of cases and wallets for iPhone has been launched by HEX.

The cases are genuine leather in designs incorporating art and characters from the legendary films. Features include genuine leather exteriors, credit card slots, cash pockets, zip closures and custom German polycarbonate phone beds.

They are available in three styles: the Snap Case, the Wallet and the Zipper Wallet, and are available for the iPhone 7 and 7 Plus, iPhone 8 and 8 Plus, and the iPhone X.

Online: hexbrand.com; prices vary; Star Wars Darth Vader for iPhone X, \$49.95, Boba Fett Wallet Case for iPhone X, \$59.95

— Compiled by TNS

## WEEKEND

# CHECK IT OUT

## Events, entertainment and other ways to fill your free time

### Revisit Star Wars' cheesiest moments in 'Holiday Special'

With the latest "Star Wars" movie hitting theaters, let's look back nearly 40 years to what most fans consider the sci-fi franchise's biggest turkey. We're talking about "The Star Wars Holiday Special," which aired but once (CBS, Nov. 17, 1978) and has never been released on VHS or DVD. Here are five things to know about the special, which was designed to maintain interest between the release of the first movie (1977) and the second ("The Empire Strikes Back"), which was due out in 1980.

The two-hour special featured Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker), Harrison Ford (Han Solo), Carrie Fisher (Princess Leia), Anthony Daniels (C-3PO) and Peter Mayhew (Chewbacca), and revolved around Chewbacca trying to get home

to celebrate Life Day with his family: wife Malla, son Itchy and father Lumpy. That meant a good portion of the special had no dialogue — viewers heard Chewbacca's family "talking" to each other in the growls that make up the Wookiee language. Apparently, the stars of the movie weren't enough star power to attract an audience. Bea Arthur, Harvey Korman, Art Carney, Diahann Carroll and Jefferson Starship make guest appearances.

The most notable part was an 11-minute cartoon that introduced galactic bounty hunter Boba Fett.

— Andy Edelstein  
Newsday

- Watch it on YouTube at [tinyurl.com/ydc7w65s](http://tinyurl.com/ydc7w65s).
- More info at [starwars-holidayspecial.com](http://starwars-holidayspecial.com).

# 2

### Stapleton finds success by keeping it simple

Singer Chris Stapleton is up for three Grammy Awards. No surprise, since the hirsute country star's debut solo album "Traveler" has gotten nothing but accolades since its 2015 release. Stapleton's new albums, "From A Room" (volumes 1 and 2), have found success in their simplicity. A stage, a guitar and a great sound system are often all Stapleton needs to make the music his fans love.



- Profile and album review on Page 36.



starwars-holidayspecial.com

"The Star Wars Holiday Special" is such an embarrassment, Star Wars creator and then-director George Lucas has said that he'd hunt down every last copy of the show and destroy it if he could.

# 3

### 'Peanuts' legacy lives on

Charles Schulz's iconic comic strip has been around since 1950, but it's still a beloved cultural force. A massive new anthology, "Celebrating Snoopy," highlights the strips that featured the beloved beagle.

And late-night talk show host Jimmy Fallon made a parody video this week of himself as teenaged Charlie Brown in the style of the CW show "Riverdale."

- "Snoopy" book review on Page 38.
- Watch Fallon's Charlie Brown/Riverdale' parody at [tinyurl.com/y7qjmmh2](http://tinyurl.com/y7qjmmh2).



# 4

### YouTube Rewind gives its spin on 2017

This year's YouTube Rewind video celebrates the hits and events of 2017 with a catchy, original song compilation by The Hood Internet. The odd references in the accompanying video include fidget spinners, the eclipse of the sun, and lots and lots of paintball battles.

- Watch it at [tinyurl.com/ycexbma2](http://tinyurl.com/ycexbma2).



## WEEKEND: MOVIES



# Parallel universes

**'Last Jedi'** aims to capture that old Star Wars feeling

BY LINDSEY BAHR ■ Associated Press

Han Solo is dead. Luke Skywalker is back, but changed. And Leia Organa's story will soon be coming to an end.

The Star Wars that inspired four decades of passionate fandom appears to be slowly but surely fading as "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" descends this weekend, giving way to a newer generation of intergalactic rebels and their foes, like Rey and Kylo Ren, and a fresh voice behind the endeavor in writer-director Rian Johnson ("Looper").

J.J. Abrams' "The Force Awakens" set the stage for this new era of the franchise, but "The Last Jedi" has to move it forward and keep audiences interested for the next one, too.

After all these years and billions of dollars, Star Wars isn't exactly a scrappy underdog anymore, but the franchise is in somewhat uncharted territory. The prequels did their own damage, but at least no one had to say goodbye to their original heroes.

And then there's the seemingly impossible standard set by that other Star Wars sequel, "The Empire Strikes Back."

Besides the main cast, filmmakers and some Lucasfilm and Walt Disney Co. brass, no one will see "The Last Jedi" until the Los Angeles premiere on Dec. 9. And determining what exactly audiences should expect is a bit like trying to assemble a puzzle with no picture and most of the pieces missing. The cast has left some adjective breadcrumbs ("intense," "emotional," "intimate," "cinematic"), but for the most part, it's a mystery.

"For me, 'The Last Jedi' is not a particularly happy story to tell, but it's just my part," Mark Hamill says cryptically. Hamill, 66, returns to play Luke Skywalker after being seen in only a few frames of "The Force Awakens," which ends on a wind-swept cliff as the young protege Rey (Daisy Ridley) approaches him looking for

“

*For me, 'The Last Jedi' is not a particularly happy story to tell, but it's just my part. ... It's got so much going on.*

Mark Hamill

training from the missing Jedi. Luke and Rey are just one of the new pairings promised for the film, which finds every character out of his or her comfort zone and facing new challenges as the Resistance organizes to go up against the First Order.

"It's got so much going on," Hamill adds. "You can cut from the more somber scenes I have to the action/adventure, the suspense, the humor ... I've only seen it once but I thought, 'This is too much information to process.'"

The marketing campaign, no doubt playing into the tone set by "Empire," has focused on the darkness and intensity of "The Last Jedi," but Johnson says that's only one element. He stresses that it is, first and foremost, a Star Wars movie. To him, that means capturing that thing that makes you want to "run out of the theater and into your backyard" to play with your spaceship toys — even without the curmudgeonly wit of Harrison Ford's Han Solo.

"That's what everyone was concerned about going in: How do you do it without him?" Johnson, 43, says. "I saw so much potential for humor in it. I was looking at every single character and trying to find opportunities to break the tension. I think people are going to be surprised by how fun and light on its feet it is."

In addition to Luke and Rey, the film brings back Carrie Fisher as Leia in her last film role (Fisher died after filming had wrapped); Adam Driver's Kylo Ren, fresh off murdering his father, Han Solo; the mysterious Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis); Domhnall Gleeson's General Hux; the ace pilot Poe (Oscar Isaac); the ex-Stormtrooper Finn (John Boyega); and his old boss,

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 25**

**Daisy Ridley returns to the role of Rey, a highly force-sensitive scavenger from the desert planet Jakku, in "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."**

LUCASFILM/AP

# WEEKEND: MOVIES

'Star Wars: The Last Jedi'

# A welcome disturbance in the Force



By JAKE COYLE  
Associated Press

**D**irector Rian Johnson's "The Last Jedi" is, by wide measure, the trippiest, scrappiest and most rule-breaking Star Wars adventure yet.

Not the exercise in nostalgia that was J.J. Abrams' "The Force Awakens." Johnson's Episode VIII takes George Lucas' space opera in new, often thrilling, and sometimes erratic directions while finding the truest expression yet of the saga's underlying ethos of camaraderie in resistance to oppression. Though there are countless familiar broad strokes — rebel escapes, Jedi soul-searching, daddy issues — "The Last Jedi" has discovered some new moves yet, in the galaxy far, far away.

As the second installment in this third Star Wars trilogy, "The Last Jedi" is like the inverted corollary of "The Empire Strikes Back" (long the superfans' favorite). While it is, like its part-two predecessor, often murky and weird, Johnson's frequently comic film distinguishes itself by upending the traditional power dynamics of heroes and bit players in the Star Wars galaxy.

Here, the odds-defying daredevil flyboy (Oscar Isaac as Resistance pilot Poe Dameron) is an impetuous chauvinist, at odds with a female commander (a purple-haired Laura Dern). "Get your head out of your cockpit," admonishes Leia (the late Carrie Fisher, to whom the film is dedicated). The master-apprentice relationship — previously Yoda instructing young

Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) on a swampy remote planet — is now tilted more toward Rey, the young Jedi (Daisy Ridley), sent to stir a monkish Skywalker from a windswept, Porg-infested isle. And instead of a Tauntaun's guts being spilled, there are even moments of animal rights reflections creeping into the galaxy. About to bite into his rotisserie dinner, Chewbacca, with a sad groan, is struck by pangs of doubt.

Abrams' finest touch in his zippy and nimble reboot was in his diverse casting — in particular Ridley and John Boyega, as Finn, the Stormtrooper turned good guy. But Johnson, who also wrote the film, has gone further to shake up the familiar roles and rhythms of Star Wars. Scattershot and loose-limbed, "The Force Awakens" doesn't worship at its own altar, often undercutting its own grandiosity.

Those breaks of form — formerly mostly reserved for a smirking Harrison Ford — will throw some diehards. Especially in the surreal isolated solos of Rey and Luke — where Luke, with a thick gray mane and a hermit's foul manner is seen drinking a creature's breast milk and pole-vaulting from rock to rock — "The Last Jedi" teeters on the edge of camp.

It's not surprising that Johnson, the director of the twisty time-traveling *noir* "Looper," has made a movie full of clever inversions. What's jarring is that he's made a Star Wars film that tries to not take itself too seriously, while simultaneously making it more emotional.

Yet before its considerable payoff,

"The Last Jedi" feels lost and grasping for its purpose. Unlike the earlier films, the less tactile "The Last Jedi" isn't much for world building, and its sense of place isn't as firm. As an intergalactic travelogue, it's a disappointment.

There are exceptions, though, especially the chambers of the Supreme Leader Snoke (Andy Serkis, adding to his gallery of grotesques). Soaked in an otherworldly crimson red, Snoke's lair looks like something out of Kubrick's "Eyes Wide Shut."

Johnson also lacks what Lucas and Abrams alike recognized as the franchise's most potent weapon: Ford. As the prairie boy turned knight, Hamill has never been the saga's heart and soul. While Luke gets his big moment, "The Last Jedi" doesn't do him any favors, plopping him on a pitiless jagged rock away from the action and with a backstory filled with regret.

As Fisher's final Star Wars film, it's a shame she isn't more front and center. (The next film was to be hers, the way Ford and now Hamill have had theirs.) But she makes her scenes count.

Though Isaac has been fashioned as the heir apparent to the bemused Ford, Boyega is the actor I've left both episode VII and VIII wanting more of. The downside in a story that spins its characters around the galaxy is that the new generation of Star Wars protagonists hasn't had time for small gestures that would shape their characters — close-ups that their forerunners were afforded. Even after two films, Rey is more of an unstoppable sprite than a fleshed-out person.

In "Star Wars: The Last Jedi," the Skywalker saga continues as the heroes of "The Force Awakens" join the galactic legends in an adventure that unlocks age-old mysteries of the Force.

LUCASFILM/AP

But "The Last Jedi," as if with a wind against its back, gathers momentum. By breaking down some of the old mythology, Johnson has staked out new territory. For the first time in a long time, a Star Wars film feels forward-moving.

Much of that sense of progress comes in the character of Rose Tico (a superlative Kelly Marie Tran), a maintenance worker who's thrust into a pivotal role in the rebellion. It's she who voices the film's abiding message, one that — as the first Star Wars film of the Trump era — has affecting resonance. The Resistance will win, she says, "not fighting what we hate" but "saving what we love."

In a pop culture juggernaut as imposing as Star Wars, these moments carry more meaning than they would elsewhere. After long skating around anything political, "The Last Jedi" — whether it's meant to be or not — has the tenor of a rallying cry. Johnson has fully internalized a single line of dialogue from "The Return of the Jedi" — "You rebel scum," said with disdain by a Nazi-like lieutenant — and turned it into a badge of pride.

"Star Wars: The Last Jedi" is rated PG-13 for sequences of sci-fi action and violence. Running time: 152 minutes.

## FROM PAGE 24

Captain Phasma (Gwendoline Christie); Chewbacca; the droids; and a host of newcomers, like Laura Dern's purple-haired Vice Admiral Holdo; a maintenance tech, Rose (Kelly Marie Tran); a hacker (Benicio Del Toro); and cut little creatures called Porgs.

Johnson's script, which he was able to write while "The Force Awakens" was being made, took some of the cast back at first.

"I was going, 'Uh, I'm not sure about this,'" Ridley says. "It just took us all a second to be like, 'OK, this is where the story is heading.'"

Johnson jokes that he's like the new boyfriend at Thanksgiving dinner whom everyone has to get used to.



LUCASFILM/AP

**John Boyega reprises his role as Finn in "Star Wars: The Last Jedi."**

(Rian) had a different challenge, which was to expand the Star Wars universe further with more inventive ideas; taking more

risks," Boyega says. "He was a real fan. I feel like he ticked off his Star Wars fanboy theories just one by one with this film."

That fandom has also helped Johnson, whom Hamill refers to as his Obi-Wan, reach a sort of Zen-like state with the film. It also doesn't hurt that Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy, who has not been afraid to make tough decisions and fire or bench directors if something isn't working, was so pleased with their collaboration and the resulting film that she has already enlisted Johnson to develop a new Star Wars trilogy separate from the Skywalker saga (he'll write and direct the first).

Now it's just a matter of putting "The Last Jedi" out into the world. Financially, there's not much to worry about — it's tracking to open somewhere in the \$200 million range (far below

"The Force Awakens'" \$248 million debut, but stunning nonetheless). Also, box office and the expectations and hopes of a loyal fanbase, who have been burned before, are two very different things.

"Having been a Star Wars fan myself for the past 40 years, I know intimately how passionate they are about it and how everyone has stuff they love and hate in every single movie. That takes the pressure off a little bit just thinking, 'Oh, there's going to be stuff that everyone likes, there's going to be stuff that people don't like, and it's going to be a mixture,'" Johnson says.

And with a smile and a shrug, he adds: "That's what being a Star Wars fan is."

## WEEKEND: MOVIES

# 'Ferdinand' not quite olé, but better than OK

BY MICHAEL RECHTSCHAFFEN

*The Hollywood Reporter*

**I**t's no "Coco," but "Ferdinand," a CG-animated adaptation of the classic 1936 Munro Leaf and Robert Lawson book about a flower-loving bull who'd rather sniff than fight, manages to squeak by with enough charming set-pieces and amusing sight gags to compensate for a stalling storyline.

Nimbly choreographed by Carlos Saldanha, marking the seventh Blue Sky feature he has either directed or co-directed, with John Cena agreeably voicing the role of the "peace-a-bull" protagonist, the Fox release should handily hit the bulls-eye with targeted holiday family audiences when it charges into theaters next weekend.

Although the Leaf book, featuring Lawson's whimsical ink drawings, has been translated into more than 60 languages, many will also be familiar with the seven-minute 1938 Disney adaptation, "Ferdinand the Bull," which would take home the Oscar for best short subject (cartoons).

Stretching the subject matter onto a feature-length canvas, the production kicks off in Casa del Toros, a bull training camp in rural Spain from which young Ferdinand bolts upon learning his dad never returned from a trip to that Madrid arena. He finds idyllic refuge on a farm belonging to Ziggy (singer Juanes), whose daughter Nina (Katie Silberman) makes a pet out of the docile creature until he grows to an enormous, threatening size (cue Cena) and is subsequently seized by the authorities and delivered back to Casa del Toros, where a bull becomes either a fighter or meat.

Not fond of either of those options, and with the famous bullfighter El Primero (Miguel Angel Silvestre) eyeing him for his farewell appearance, Ferdinand plots an escape with the assistance of Lupe, a decidedly hyper calming goat (the always dependable Kate McKinnon), and a trio of hedgehogs named Uno, Dos and Cuatro (Gina Rodriguez, Daveed Diggs and Gabriel Iglesias) who prefer not to speak of the absent Tres.

There are moments of comic delight to be found here, like a literal "bull in a china shop" sequence, as well as the foppish antics of a trio of Lipizzaner horses (voiced by Boris Kodjoe, Flula Borg and Sally Phillips). But the plotting — the script is credited to Robert L. Baird, Tim Federle and Brad Copeland — admittedly takes a while to find its footing, and even when it does, the stop-start momentum never quite rises to the occasion.

The visual renderings, including those pastoral vistas, with all the bright green rolling hills and sunny azure skies, are certainly pleasing to the eye, and the characters, particularly the



20th Century Fox photos

**After being mistaken for a dangerous beast, a giant bull, voiced by John Cena, is captured and torn from his home. Determined to return to his family, he rallies a misfit team on the ultimate adventure in 'Ferdinand.'**

formidable Ferdinand, inhabit those vibrant spaces gracefully.

The voice work is nimble, but although Cena and McKinnon are terrific, it might have been nice to have heard Hispanic actors in the lead roles rather than just the supporting ones.

Likewise, a golden opportunity seems to have been missed with the soundtrack, where, of the three original songs, two are performed by Nick Jonas, reserving the third for Juanes. In a year when Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee's "Despacito" smashed chart records the world over, it might have been a better plan to hear how Ferdinand and company would do it in Madrid or Toledo.

"Ferdinand" is rated PG for rude humor, action and some thematic elements. Running time: 107 minutes.

## Story of peaceful bull still resonates

BY KAREN MACPHERSON  
*Special to The Washington Post*

**T**he project began as a lark, an author's hasty effort to write a children's book manuscript for his artist friend to illustrate. Yet the resulting picture book, "The Story of Ferdinand," became an immediate best-seller and cultural touchstone.

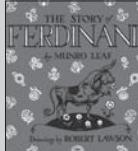
Both Adolf Hitler and Francisco Franco banned it. Gandhi and Franklin Eleanor Roosevelt admired it.

Published in 1936, the story of the peaceful, flower-sniffing bull written by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson is considered a classic of American children's literature and has never been out of print.

The book is now the basis for the animated film "Ferdinand," with the main character voiced by the wrestler-actor John Cena. There are new characters, plot twists and some sapphistick humor, but the film retains the "stay true to yourself" message at the core of the book. Perhaps it helps that one of the screenwriters is Tim Federle, who is an award-winning children's book author.

"The Story of Ferdinand" is one of several examples of how a children's book went out into the pop culture and had an impact far beyond the library world," said Leonard S. Marcus, children's literature historian and author of "Minders of Make Believe: Idealists, Entrepreneurs, and the Shaping of American Children's Literature."

"It was an appealing story that people could project their own fantasies on." And, Marcus added, it "proved to be one of those rare books openly appreciated by adults as well as by children."



Leaf wrote "The Story of Ferdinand" in less than an hour one rainy fall afternoon as a gift to his good friend Lawson. Contending that "dogs, rabbits, mice and goats had all been done a thousand times," Leaf focused his story on a Spanish bull named Ferdinand who eschews fighting for flower-sniffing, refusing to fight even when forced to face the matador in the ring. Instead, Ferdinand sits down to enjoy the fragrance of the flowers adorning the hair of women spectators.

"It was one of those brainstorm books," said Anita Silvey, a children's literature expert and author of "The Essential Guide to Children's Books and Their Creators." "Leaf was the ideal picture-book writer. In the best picture-book tradition, he kept it simple and allows both room for the child's imagination and for the artist's imagination."

Illustrator Lawson's masterful black-and-white drawings perfectly complement Leaf's text, adding energy and humor to the tale. In one famous example, Lawson depicts Ferdinand's favorite cork tree with bunches of wine corks hanging among the leaves. "That's what of what words so well — there is a complete interplay between words and illustrations," Silvey added.

The timing of the book's publication — just months after the start of the Spanish Civil War — proved a boon to sales as both sides excoriated it, while Hitler called it "degenerate democratic propaganda." Others, including the Roosevelts, were fans of the book. Anne Carroll Moore, the first president of the New York Public Library's children's division, called it an "effortless, happy collaboration ... designed for sheer entertainment of the ageless."

Ferdinand insisted he had written the story of the gentle bull simply to amuse children. In a New York Times interview, Leaf said that Ferdinand's aversion to violence merely manifested his "good taste and strength of character," demonstrating that he was "just a superior soul, a philosopher."

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

# Nuremberg market is nutcracker sweet

I'm standing in one of Germany's largest Christmas markets: 200 wooden stalls crammed with local artisans dealing in all things Christmassy. With all these goodies, it's no wonder that Nuremberg's Christkindlesmarkt attracts more than 2 million people annually to the city's main square.

A traditional center for toy-making in Germany, Nuremberg has long prided itself on the quality of its market. With no canned music, fake greenery, plastic kitsch or war toys, it feels classier than your average crafts fair. As far back as 1610, a proclamation required that "indecent joke articles would be confiscated." The merchants' stalls are old-style wood huts with traditional ambiance and each year the most beautiful stall is awarded the prestigious "Prunz Man" trophy, a homemade figurine made of fruit.

Germany's holiday markets are a Christmas fantasy of tiny figurines — and this market offers some of the best. Nutcrackers, strong-jawed to crack even the toughest nuts, are usually authority figures like soldiers, policemen and constables. "Smokers," which are small carvings of woodworkers, loggers, postmen and other common folk, send out fragrant incense from their tiny mouths.

Many of these classic wooden figurines originated in the highly forested region of Saxony in eastern Germany. When the iron ore and silver mines went out of business back in the 15th century, Saxon miners became woodworkers.

A popular Nuremberg decoration is the candle chime. A multi-tiered wooden stand holds candles, which heat a pin-wheel on top, causing it to spin. Each level of the stand features a carved scene — a Nativity, forest critters, nutcrackers or

miners at work. It's said these chimes were especially popular in mining communities because of the miners' hunger for, and appreciation of, light.

The golden Rausch Angel hovering

above the market is an icon of Christmas in Nuremberg. The name is a bit of German onomatopoeia — "rausch" is the sound of wind blowing through the angel's gold foil wings. For locals, there's no better way to cap their home's Christmas tree than with a miniature version of this angel.

After the sun sets, Nuremberg's Christkindlesmarkt delights as shoppers enjoy some old-time fast food. Spicy smoke billows from stalls selling the famous Nuremberg bratwurst, skinny as your little finger. Stick three of them on a crunchy fresh roll, then add a generous squirt of spicy mustard.

At the next stall, wrap your mittens around a mug of hot-spiced wine. A disposable paper or plastic cup would ruin the experience, so you must pay a deposit for a nicely decorated ceramic one.

Bakeries crank out traditional gingerbread using the same recipe they did in the 17th century. Back then, Nuremberg was the gingerbread capital of the world, and a stroll through the market makes it clear that the city's love affair with the cake continues.

For four centuries, the families of



Rick Steves



Courtesy of ricksteves.com

**Nuremberg's cathedral towers over the city's Christmas market, the largest of its kind in Germany. The market allows no canned music, fake greenery or plastic kitsch.**

Nuremberg have bought their gingerbread at this thriving Christkindlesmarkt. The gingerbread was not baked in the home, but was made exclusively by a guild of master bakers, the Lebkuechler.

Another German tradition that has spread all over Europe and the New World is the candy cane. The first were simple, straight white sticks of sugar candy. In 1670, a choirmaster at the Cologne Cathedral, fed up with noisy kids ruining the ambience, passed them out during a Nativity service to keep the restless children quiet. He'd had the ends bent to depict a shepherd's crook. German immigrants to America popularized the practice of using

them to decorate Christmas trees (and an American company added the signature red stripes in the 1920s).

Germany has long celebrated Christmas well, with markets that seem more like a public service than a seasonal business. From sweets to savory treats, candles to carousels, Nuremberg's Christkindlesmarkt warms up cold days and lights up dark nights. Its festive swirl of heartwarming sights, sounds and scents is sure to get you in the holiday spirit.

Rick Steves ([ricksteves.com](http://ricksteves.com)) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at [rick@ricksteves.com](mailto:rick@ricksteves.com) and follow his blog on Facebook.

## TOP TRAVEL PICKS

### Battle of the Bulge remembered

Seven decades on, they remember. Through the weekend, Belgium's Ardennes region is the site of commemorations honoring the series of battles collectively known as the Battle of the Bulge, fought along an 80-mile front between Dec. 16, 1944, and Jan. 25, 1945. It was the last major Nazi offensive against the Allies and the largest battle fought by U.S. forces in World War II. Events are held in large part by the local communities, re-enactors and history groups from the Benelux countries and beyond.

Most of the action takes place in and around Bastogne, Belgium. Program highlights on Saturday include a parade along the Grand Rue and wreath-laying ceremonies in front of the Patton and McAuliffe monuments at 3 p.m. The throwing of nuts takes place from the Town Hall balcony at 4 p.m. On Dec. 17, a parade of military vehicles along the Grand Rue gets underway at 2:30 p.m.

On both days, there's a static display of WWII vehicles at the Bastogne Barracks; the Bastogne War Museum and 101st Airborne Museum are also open. For details, see [tinyurl.com/y8ypgff9](http://tinyurl.com/y8ypgff9) (French and Dutch).

Organized walks through



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: [stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler](http://stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler)

areas where battles once raged have long been part of the commemorations; this year's March along the Defensive Perimeter of Bastogne can be started between 7 a.m. and 9:30 a.m. Dec. 16. Participants choose between 7, 14 or 20 km routes. This year's edition goes through the sector of Hemeroule. The walk begins from the Sports Center of Bastogne on Rue Gustave Delperdange. Register from 3-8 p.m. the night before or from 7 a.m. on the day at the start point. Participation costs 6 euros (\$7.10); [tinyurl.com/yc5hm9br](http://tinyurl.com/yc5hm9br).

Ardennes History Remember, a group of Belgian amateur historians and military vehicle owners formed in 2016, also holds events over the weekend.

Manhay, about 30 miles north of Bastogne, is the site of a gathering of tanks and other military vehicles, along with a military memorabilia market from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Dec. 16-17 in the Grammen cultural center; [tinyurl.com/yaj6dns4](http://tinyurl.com/yaj6dns4).

### Christmas markets without the masses

Christmas markets are among the most popular diversions at this time of year, and nowadays cities of all sizes host them. For something with more intimacy, why not consider a smaller event that takes place over just one or two weekends, or perhaps one set in a castle? Here are a few options for those in Germany:

• **Markets in castles:** Bruchsal Castle's Schlossweihnacht, or Castle Christmas market, offers a craftsman's market, live music and entertainment on stage, guided tours and more. Entry costs 5 euros for adults; see [schlossweihnacht-bruchsal.de](http://schlossweihnacht-bruchsal.de). Schloss Guteneck by Nabburg hosts a medieval-themed fair at which craftsmen demonstrate their skills and heated areas serve food and drink; adult entry is 5 euros; [tinyurl.com/yav5w2gs](http://tinyurl.com/yav5w2gs).

• **Half-timbered heaven:** Forchheim not only has a market, its facades make up an



Stars and Stripes

**Re-enactors dressed in period uniforms drive a jeep through mud and water in Bastogne, Belgium, during past a commemoration of the World War II's Battle of the Bulge.**

Advent calendar in which a new window opens every evening. Bad Mergentheim's old town center makes a lovely backdrop for its Christmas festivities. Bad Wimpfen's market drips with atmosphere, as does Saarburg's, which is next to a waterfall.

• **Wire villages:** Wine taverns surrounded by vineyards make a storybook setting for smaller Christmas markets. Options for this weekend include those in Doerrnbach and Rhodt unter Riedburg in the southern German Wine Road, Bingen and Oppenheim in Rheinhessen and Altenahr in the Ahr region.

• **Eco-market:** Long a hit among Americans in the Kaiser-slaufen Military Community,

this two-day event takes place at the Haus der Nachhaltigkeit in the hamlet of Johanniskreuz in Trippstadt, about 12 miles south of Kaiserslautern. In a romantic forest setting, 70 stands offer regional foods and handicrafts. Kids can enjoy pony rides, a carousel and a campfire. On Saturday evening, fire artists show their skills. Torchlit picnics, mulled wine stands and musicians playing Alpine horns complete the rustic scene. Parking is limited, so consider public transportation; buses leave frequently from Kaiserslautern's main station. The market runs 2-8 p.m. Dec. 16 and 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Dec. 17. Entry is free. See [hdn-pfalz.de/index.php?id=79](http://hdn-pfalz.de/index.php?id=79).

## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Europe

# Palermo – an Italian mosaic

## Sicily's capital offers a bold street life of color, chaos and culture

BY CAIN BURDEAU

The Associated Press

**F**or many travelers, Italy is seen as romantic, mysterious and a bit chaotic, with torpid heat, gorgeously rich colors and irresistible food.

In reality, of course, every region has a distinct culture and identity. But Palermo, the ancient capital of Sicily and jewel of the Mediterranean, lives up to the Italy of popular imagination. It's joyful and colorful, rich in art and cuisine, but also disorganized, unable even to reliably collect the garbage.

Life is busy lived on the streets here. Clothes hang haphazardly from balconies. Motor scooters zip down narrow alleyways (often driven by children going the wrong way). People shout in Sicilian — a dialect incomprehensible to many Italian speakers — back and forth across streets and from windows. They gesture, sing and openly observe others.

All this plays out in a city

steeped in religious rituals, intricate history, stunning art and stunning decay. It's a place living amid the past — a past lost in so much of today's modernizing Italy.

It's also a culture that can seem oddly familiar to outsiders, likely due to the waves of Sicilians who emigrated to the U.S. and made their mark on everyday American life in everything from food to pop culture. Part of "The Godfather" was filmed here and the Mafia remains a force despite government crackdowns and the public's outrage and

resistance in the wake of bombings that killed two anti-Mafia magistrates and others with them in 1992.

Before being bombed by Americans in World War II and ransacked by the Mafia after the war, Palermo was for centuries one of Europe's most splendid cities, rich with churches, palaces, theaters, villas. Much of that illustrious past remains, albeit faded, but so does deep poverty.

There are medieval Arab-Norman palaces (*La Zisa*, *La Cuba*, the Norman Palace), fantastic churches (the main cathedral with tombs of Norman royalty and the Cathedral of Monreale with extraordinary mosaics), art-



Vendors of the Vucciria street market in Palermo play briscola, an Italian card game, on Via Maccherronai during the midday lunch hours. Palermo, the ancient capital of Sicily, lives up to the Italy of popular imagination. It will be celebrated as Italy's Capital of Culture in 2018.

PHOTOS BY CAIN BURDEAU/AP



Salvatore Lannino chats with a visitor in the Capo street market where he sells typical Palermo street food. Among his wares are soft-bread sandwiches with mitza, the spleen and lungs of veal.



Palermo's Ballaro market is a place that awakens the senses. Shoppers examine wares to the sound of loud, raucous yelling of the sellers, inviting customers to buy.

filled Spanish palaces, the grand Teatro Massimo opera house, and much more.

What makes the city unique is the mixture of cultures across centuries: a tapestry of Phoenician, Greek, Roman, Arab, Norman, Jewish, French, English, Spanish and Italian influences.

"You need an encyclopedia to describe the Palermitan," says Pietro Tramonte, a retired accountant who runs an eccentric outdoor bookstore. "Here you find a laboratory, just like when life began. It's an impossible mosaic. But we're forced to live together."

Just then, a man in a car hails Tramonte from the end of the alleyway. He's dropping off a

strange donation: hardbound books about fascism from the Italian dictator Benito Mussolini.

"Palermo is the fountain of serendipity," Tramonte continues. "When a foreigner comes to Palermo, he should let himself go. Let yourself be a feather in the wind and you can find that wind can take you to beautiful places."

Outdoor markets are some of the best places to enjoy the riotous beauty of Palermo. Vendors shout out prices. Butchers slice, pound and weigh meat. Fishmongers' stands display decapitated swordfish. Things sizzle in pots



Apartment residents in the historic center of Palermo hang laundry and grow plants on their balconies.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29

# WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

## FROM PAGE 28

and pans at kiosks: chickpea fritters, potato and egg rolls, stuffed rice balls.

Your head spins at the movement, the flashes of life: A fellow brushes by with a pushcart full of sardines for sale; another tries to catch your attention to sell you a bouquet of flowers. You admire displays of oranges, lemons, apples, strawberries, lettuce heads, broccoli and tomatoes as mouth-watering works of art.

You're in a stream of people, moving, buying, looking, talking, bumping into each other with bags full of food. A scooter blows its horn and plows through.

Your senses are assaulted by mounds of olives and dried tomatoes, bunches of rosemary and bay leaves, cheeses.

"We were born here and we will die here," says Francesco Andolina, a fruit and vegetable vendor whose family has been getting up before dawn and working until dusk in the Ballaro market for generations.

But Palermo's most famous market, the Vucciria, is a shadow of its former self. Merchants now offer antiques and souvenirs to tourists. The streets are no longer slick with vegetable and fruit remains.

"All the people want to go to the supermarkets with their carts," Andolina says and mockingly pretends to push a cart.

Palermo recently restricted most cars from the city center. "Now you can hear your own footsteps, you can hear your voice. That was taken away when there were cars," says Sara Cappello, a folk singer and storyteller.

And in 2018, Palermo is being celebrated as Italy's Capital of Culture. "We deserve to be the cultural capital because we are a wonderful city," Cappello says.

She then thinks of the city's continuing problems: Trash piling up, corruption, unregulated development.

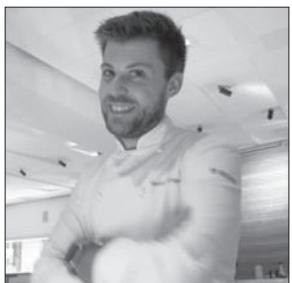
"We mistreated our city so badly," she says. "But maybe this, too, is the fascination of Palermo."



CAIN BUREAU/AP  
Palm trees rise in the Villa Bonanno park outside the Norman Palace in Palermo.



PHOTOS BY NANCY MONTGOMERY/Stars and Stripes



Above: El Coq chef Lorenzo Cogo often steps out of the kitchen to talk with diners. Cogo is one of the most innovative young chefs in Italy, according to the Michelin guide. He specializes in unique dishes with many unusual flavor combinations, like this soup, left, which contained some ingredients that weren't easy to identify.

# After Hours: Italy

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY  
*Stars and Stripes*

**W**e were seated with menus in our hands when everyone realized we were in the wrong restaurant. We'd reserved at El Coq, yet here we were at Garibaldi. The question pushed way to understanding: El Coq was one floor up, via an inconspicuous elevator by the bar. Up we went, feeling silly.

I'd anticipated trying downtown Vicenza's only Michelin-starred restaurant for a long time and decided to go ahead during a friend's visit. We'd had dinner together many times, years ago in some of Seattle's best restaurants. But we hadn't done the tasting menu, several hours' extremely expensive dining thing.

And we probably won't again. You can spend 130 euros (\$154) on five courses and another 50 euros for the wine pairing only so often. You can only rarely try



El Coq restaurant revels in combining what would not traditionally be combined, such as a little tart of kiwi fruit and capers.

a kiwi and caper tartlet.

The young chef, Lorenzo Cogo, is renowned as "one of the most innovative and imaginative in Italy," according to the Michelin guide. He aims to "surprise the smell and tease the taste," according to his restaurant website, and meld "tradition with creative inspiration."

And indeed, fanciful morsels

came one after the other, looking like little pieces of art. There was a magenta "homage to beet," and tomato water cannelloni, ricotta and buckwheat with ginger pumpkin cream.

There was carpaccio of amberjack with gin and citrus fruit, and a potato cream with cuttlefish, herring caviar and dill.

All very complicated and inno-

## EL COQ

**Address:** Piazza dei Signori 1, Vicenza 36100  
**Hours:** 7:30 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. Tuesdays through Sundays. Closed Mondays.  
**Prices:** Expensive. Five-course tasting menu 130 euros. A la carte from 18 euros to 29 euros.  
**Phone:** (+39) 0444330681; email: ristorante@elcoq.com; website: elcoq.com

— Nancy Montgomery

native. With many unusual flavor combinations.

Which for the most part we didn't love.

"To many notes," said my friend, quoting Emperor Joseph II's critique of Mozart's "The Marriage of Figaro."

By contrast, the dining room, with eight tables, is spare and subdued, furnished, my friend, said in a sort of "retro moderne" style.

My favorite dish was the curry risotto with yellow pepper and lemon. It really did succeed in being like nothing you've had before, and tasted terrific.

The big T-bone steak that followed us back to the basics. It was Rubia Gallega beef, imported from northwestern Spain, where the cattle aren't slaughtered until the autumn of their lives. It was a good steak like any good steak.

Dessert was something combining strawberry and violet, which sounded delightful but somehow disappointed. And there was also the kiwi and caper tartlet, which didn't sound delightful at all. I defy anyone to disagree with the late Nora Ephron. Any dish that tastes good with capers in it, she wrote, "tastes even better with capers in it."

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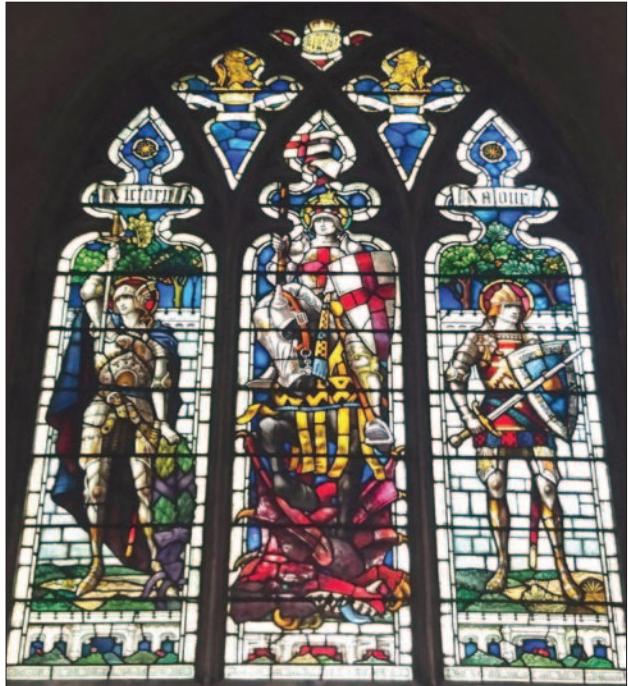
El Coq's dining room, with only eight tables, is spare and subdued. Getting to the restaurant can be a challenge; it's one floor up from Garibaldi via an inconspicuous elevator by the bar.

## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe



Above: A children's choir service at the Norwich Cathedral in Norwich, England. The cathedral regularly holds Church of England morning prayer, Holy Communion and evensong services. Right: A stained glass window at the cathedral dedicated to fallen British soldiers of World War I depicts St. George flanked by armored figures representing victory and valor.



PHOTOS BY WILLIAM HOWARD/Stars and Stripes

# A DIVINE DIVERSION

## England's Norwich Cathedral brims with beauty and history

By WILLIAM HOWARD  
*Stars and Stripes*

I was immediately drawn toward the Norwich Cathedral in England during my first visit to the Norwich city center.

As I left the shopping mall, I looked up to see the cathedral's 315-foot-tall spire towering above the other buildings.

It led me like a beacon to the amazing Norman cathedral, a superb example of Romanesque architecture.

Construction of the cathedral began in 1096. It was completed in 1145, topped with a wooden spire clad in lead.

Lightning struck the wooden spire in 1169 and again in 1463, causing fires inside the building. The second fire was so intense it changed some of the building's Caen limestone from a creamy color to pink.

After several reconstructions over the centuries, a spire of stone was erected in 1480. It remains the second-tallest in England.



The front entrance to the Norwich Cathedral.

If you're brave enough to climb the steps to an observation point in the spire, you'll see a pair of resident peregrine falcons and their chicks on a nesting platform up close.

The cathedral houses England's second-largest cloister, which was completed in 1430, after the Black Death.

I asked a bishop about the cathedral's history and was enthralled for about an hour by tales of drama throughout the centuries.

I spent the rest of my visit in quiet reflection, walking under stained-glass windows and along the flat labyrinth carved into the grass outside.

### ON THE QT

#### DIRECTIONS

Address: 65 The Close, Norwich NR1 4DH, England.

The cathedral is about an hour's drive from RAF Mildenhall via the A11. Limited parking is available at the cathedral for disabled visitors, and there are several parking lots nearby in the city center and Park and Ride services.

#### TIMES

Hours: Open daily 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.

#### COSTS

Admission: Free

#### FOOD

The Refectory inside the cathedral is a cafe that serves light lunches, soups, cakes and hot and cold drinks.

#### INFORMATION

Phone: (+44)(0)1603 218300,  
email: [reception@cathedral.org.uk](mailto:reception@cathedral.org.uk), website: [cathedral.org.uk](http://cathedral.org.uk)

— William Howard

Outside the east end of the cathedral I found the grave of Edith Cavell, who started the first professional nursing school in Belgium in 1907. After the outbreak of World War I, she treated combatants on both sides of the conflict.

The cathedral holds Church of England morning prayer, Holy Communion and evensong services. It hosts 50-minute tours between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m., Mondays to Saturdays and at 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. Sundays.

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[@Howard\\_stripes](https://Twitter)

**TRAVEL Q&A****When traveling,  
avoid clothes that  
scream 'American'**

Q: I am traveling to Italy in May and June. What type of clothes should I pack so I don't look too much like an American tourist? Also, I'm pondering what type of bag or purse to carry during the day/evening. Any suggestions? Thanks!

A: Clothing is pretty universal these days — meaning, everyone is wearing yoga pants off the mat. However, to downplay your nationality, avoid items with flags, eagles, sports team logos and university names. Sneakers and hoodies are fairly common in most destinations.

For style and repeat wears, choose darker colors, such as black and navy. Choose basics like simple sweaters, T-shirts, a blazer, dark-colored jeans and A-line skirts you can pair with tights. Scarves add a dash of color plus warmth; bring costume jewelry that you can layer on for evening activities.

For the bag, consider a sleek backpack or cross-body bag; if possible, put a little lock on it so no one can slip their fingers inside. Eagle Creek has some good options, as do PacSafe and LL Bean. I usually travel with a foldable backpack for more casual destinations and a cross-body bag for more sophisticated places.

Q: I've looked on the internet to find the best time to view the northern lights. However, some sites say from September to April, others from November to April and still others say from November to February. I would like to narrow the window as to the best time for viewing since this visit to Iceland might be a once-in-a-lifetime trip.

A: Most aurora-watchers say that March or September are your best bets. Take a look at NOAA's web page on viewing the aurora. Basically, it can't be predicted months in advance, so if you are going to Iceland just for that purpose, you might be better off going spur of the moment based on weather forecasts. WOW and Icelandair often have cheap fares. Make sure you head to a spot in Iceland that offers dark skies.

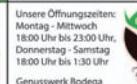
Q: We will visit Ireland for the first time during spring break, arriving in Dublin on March 24. Is it possible to feel some "leftover" atmosphere of St. Patrick's Day celebrations, even though the official events will be over for a few days by then?

Another question: Do we need to buy the tickets to the National Leprechaun Museum in advance? We won't be certain about the exact time when we will get to that museum, so we'd prefer buying the tickets on the spot.

A: It feels like every day is St. Patrick's Day in Ireland. You will probably see some leftover decorations and will have no trouble finding Irish drinking, singing and having a great time.

You will likely be OK buying tickets last minute, but you never know. It's best to book online as soon as you know your plans.

— The Washington Post

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## WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Pacific



PHOTOS BY WYATT OLSON/Stars and Stripes

Whale-watchers gather on the bow of the Majestic and search for telltale signs of humpbacks, the most obvious being a water spray made by its blowhole.

# A whale of a time

Cruise in Hawaii takes visitors to spot majestic sea creatures

By WYATT OLSON  
Stars and Stripes

**J**ust like frigid tourists who flock to Hawaii for a winter getaway, so too do humpback whales head to the Rainbow State this time of year.

Beginning in December, they arrive from the north Pacific to the warm waters of Hawaii, the only U.S. state where they mate, calve and nurse their young.

They spend the winter months frolicking in the clear waters of the Hawaiian Islands, and watching the 45-ton adults court is among the top attractions for visitors and residents alike.

You can see them from a number of shore-side vantage points, but for serious whale-watching you need to get on a boat.

Several companies offer cruises from Oahu, with the excursions usually lasting a few hours and including a meal.

Atlantis Adventures' 150-foot Majestic offers a comfortable view from an enclosed second-level deck through wide, panoramic windows. It departs near downtown Honolulu, a short distance from Waikiki Beach.

The enclosed deck is essential because it can get downright cold on the outdoor viewing platforms



A humpback whale dives into waters just off Waikiki Beach, offering a view of the white tail markings that are distinctive to the species.



Passengers aboard the Majestic relax inside the enclosed top-level deck during a whale-watching excursion.

as the boat zips along — more so if there's a winter drizzle coming down.

But you'll want to go to the open bow of the ship once the captain spots the telltale sign of a humpback: the 20-foot-high blast of seawater from the surface out of the whale's blowhole.

By law, ships aren't allowed to get closer than 100 yards to the whales, but the gentle beasts don't follow the law and sometimes get closer than that to the boat. Once the captain has slowed or stopped the boat, it becomes a waiting game for the whale — or whales, as they are often in groups — to come up for air every 10 to 15 minutes for adults, 3 to 5 minutes for calves.

When they do come up for a breath, they usually arch headfirst over the surface, then dive so that their tails stick straight up. (Humpback trivia: the all-gray whales have white markings on their tail that are as unique and individual as our fingerprints.)

If you're lucky, you'll see — and hear — a tail slap, a splash that generally serves as a warning sign. Or you might see the mother of all antics, the "breach," in which the whale launches itself entirely out of the water.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33

## ON THE QT

### DIRECTIONS

From Waikiki Beach, take Ala Moana Boulevard west. Drive about 2½ miles, then take a left onto Bishop Street. In about 50 yards, take a left onto Aloha Tower Drive. You will almost immediately see the Majestic moored to the pier. Parking lot adjacent to pier.

### TIMES

Departs pier daily at 11:30 a.m. Check in required before 11 a.m. Cruise takes 2.5 hours.

### COSTS

Adults \$69, children ages 7-12 \$40, ages 6 and younger free.

### FOOD

Lunch included with cruise: deli meats and cheeses, assorted breads, pasta salad, potato chips, seasonal fruits, cookies, brownies. Coffee, hot tea and soft drinks included with meal. Alcoholic beverages and juices available for purchase.

### INFORMATION

Phone: (808) 973-9800; website: atlantisadventures.com/waikiki-whale-watch-cruise

### NOTE

Free round-trip transportation from certain Waikiki Beach hotels is available. Cancellations made less than 24 hours in advance or no shows will be charged the full cruise fee.

— Wyatt Olson

## WEEKEND: FOOD &amp; DINING

Pacific

# After Hours: Japan

BY MONIQUE WILSON

Special to Stars and Stripes

**P**lease find a seat before ordering." That was the first thing I read after walking into J.S. Foodies at LaLaport mall, not far from the east side of Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo.

While scanning the restaurant for an open table to accommodate my mom and me and our shopping bags, I noticed that the interior resembled a state-side food court. We chose part-booth, part-table lounge seating near the back and grabbed two menus.

I was pleasantly surprised to see a variety of offerings — from pancakes and burgers to smoothies and coffee — that would appeal to both kids and adults.

As a starter, we decided to split the fish and chips for \$80 yen (or about \$5.10). For our meals, mom chose the Maple Butter B.L.T. (880 yen) and I settled on the Fried Chicken Waffle (also 880 yen).

Both dishes came with a side of fries. For drinks, we ordered water and a Coke, though I later regretted not trying one of those smoothies (400 yen). We ordered near the register and were given a pager to take back to our table.

J.S. Foodies has a noticeably calm and relaxing vibe. The music was neither too loud nor too soft. There were a few kids running around, and a gentleman worked on his laptop

## J.S. FOODIES

**Location:** On the second floor of LaLaport, a mall with more than 250 stores, in Tachikawa. From Tachikawa Station, take the Tama Intercity Monorail to Tachigi Station. From there, it's a 2-minute walk to LaLaport. By car, it takes roughly 25 minutes.

while eating his meal. A group of women chatted over coffee, smoothies and soft drinks. The atmosphere was a welcome break from LaLaport's crowded and hectic shops.

The first food to arrive was the fish and chips. The fish was crispy but not too greasy, and steaming hot — so much so that we had to wait for it to cool before attempting another bite. The fries were thin, resembling shoestrings rather than chips. However, there were so many that we easily filled up on them.

About 10 minutes after we finished the starter, our entrees arrived. I saw this as a downside to the experience, but the food was worth the wait.

The chicken with my waffle was garnished with fresh parsley. The chicken was crunchier on the outside than I'm used to; however, this added texture and flavor. The meat was perfectly tender.

**Hours:** 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily  
**Prices:** Expect to spend between \$1,100 to 1,500 yen, or about \$11 to \$15 per person.

**Dress:** Casual  
**Information:** 042-595-9393; <http://foodies.journal-standard.jp>

— Monique Wilson

J.S. Foodies offers waffles with a variety of toppings, but I ordered mine plain. It was golden brown, crispy on the outside and soft and warm on the inside.

Mom's B.L.T. came with a piece of paper folded into a triangle shape that said: "The perfect way to eat a burger is to bite into it." We later learned that she was supposed to place her sandwich inside the paper, sort of like a taco, to hold everything in place.

Mom enjoyed her B.L.T. and said she'd consider ordering it on a return trip.

As we neared the end of our meal, we both realized we would be too full to finish our fries. If I could do it over, I'd probably stick with just getting a waffle since the chicken was a little too filling for me, and I am by no means a light eater.

I recommend that anyone — especially families — looking for a light lunch or fulfilling meal go in and find a seat.



PHOTOS BY MONIQUE WILSON/Special to Stars and Stripes

The Maple Butter B.L.T. at J.S. Foodies, a popular restaurant with locations throughout Japan, came with a piece of paper intended to hold the sandwich together.



The Fried Chicken Waffle came with crispy chicken and a waffle that was crisp on the outside and soft on the inside.

## FROM PAGE 32

water and splashes down spectacularly.

It's best to bring a pair of binoculars or a camera with a telephoto lens. Once you've gauged the vicinity of an area of activity with the naked eye, keep watch through the lens for their return to the surface.

Conventional wisdom holds that a calm, clear day is best for spotting whales, and as far as visibility goes, that's probably true. But the best, busiest whale-watching excursion I've ever been on was aboard the Majestic during a miserable day of high wind and almost constant rain.

Groups of males were constantly jostling each other in contests of mating superiority. They were fast-moving, sometimes breaking through the water surprisingly close to the boat. Still, even then I didn't see a breach.

Humpbacks were hunted almost to extinction by the beginning of the 20th century. They remain an endangered species but are making a comeback. In 1993, there were an estimat-

ed 6,000 whales in the northern Pacific Ocean, with about 4,000 of those regularly wintering in Hawaiian waters, according to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Today, more than 10,000 whales make Hawaii their primary wintering waters, NOAA said.

Humpbacks also winter near western Mexico and around the islands of southern Japan, migrating as far as 3,000 miles. They swim almost continuously at 3 to 7 mph.

Instead of teeth, humpbacks have bristles called baleen in their mouths, which capture the tiniest of food, such as krill and herring.

Humpbacks spend more than 90 percent of their lives under water, and as you stand aboard the Majestic, you'll probably swear it's more like 99 percent.

But it's that scarcity that makes it so memorable when one arches its back gracefully out of the water, flips its tail into the air and then disappears once again into the deep where it spends so much of its life.

[olson.wyatt@stripes.com](mailto:olson.wyatt@stripes.com)

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## WEEKEND: TRAVEL

## Healdsburg, in heart of California wine country, is



*open for*  
**business**

2017

SONOMA COUNTY



PHOTOS BY MARY ANN ANDERSON/TNS

**Autumn color dazzles in Sonoma's wine country. Only a very small percentage of wineries and vineyards in this California county were touched by October's wildfires, and the region is wide open for tourism.**



Above: The scenery that is a hallmark of Sonoma's wine country remains intact.

The tree-shaded Healdsburg Plaza is the focus of the small wine country town of Healdsburg in Sonoma County, Calif. Healdsburg was spared damage by October's wildfires.



Above: The scenery that is a hallmark of Sonoma's wine country remains intact.

By MARY ANN ANDERSON

*Tribune News Service*

**H**ealdsburg and Sonoma for, among other things, the extravaganza of dazzling fall color of the vineyards.

And therein lies one reason I am in Healdsburg. I love autumn and all that it brings, and I've always wanted to see Sonoma County's vineyards in their glory, having seen them before only in spring and summer.

Naturally I was also concerned that everything in Sonoma County burned, but a friend who travels here for work convinced me otherwise. Together we visit, flying into San Francisco and then renting a car and driving for endless miles through the Sonoma countryside, with Healdsburg as our home base.

Our three-night stay in Healdsburg was at the Hotel Les Mars. It is here we meet Brian Sommer, its general manager. He is chair of the Healdsburg Tourism Improvement District. It's a small town. Almost everyone is connected to tourism and wears many hats.

When I ask Sommer about those boiling rivers of wine, he laughs and says he hadn't heard of such a thing. "Ninety-eight percent of the 2017 vintage was already in," he points out, adding that tourism took a direct hit nonetheless because of the perception cast by news reports that Sonoma and Napa were pretty much wiped off the map.

He, along with everyone else even remotely connected to tourism, wants the visitors to come back. A hundred wineries are within a 10-minute drive of his hotel, he says, and the hotel partners with Silver Service and Healdsburg Tours to offer tours of the wine country in luxury vehicles. The truth is, he says, while wine is the mainstay of Sonoma, there is so much to do in addition to wine-tasting and tours, including canoeing or kayaking the Russian River, the softly flowing river that cuts a scenic swath through Sonoma; hot air ballooning; exploring art galleries; meandering the coast near Bodega Bay and Jenner; and dining out. It's all still here, he assures me.

My friend and I set out the next morning to visit Honor Mansion, a charming and very peaceful vineyard inn hidden away on a tree-lined street in Healdsburg. Years before I had stayed at the inn, and owner Steve Fowler welcomes me again with open arms. As he bustles about serving breakfast, I strike up a conversation with a couple named Ron and Jane.

Ron is an energy consultant, and Jane had an embroidery business. They are in their mid-70s, but look much younger. They are evacuees from nearby Santa Rosa, where the worst of the fires, in their words hot enough to melt jewelry and warp cast iron, devastated entire neighborhoods, including their home and Jane's home-based business. Honor Mansion has been their home since.

"We're putting in a bid on a home, and we can start over," Jane says. "Some of our friends who are in their 80s can't and have moved away."

Later that morning at Jordan Winery, a family wine estate established by Tom and Sally Jordan and set on 1,200 acres of hilltop vineyards, I meet not only Mattson, but also second-generation vintner John Jordan, who's now CEO of the winery and who's also a philanthropist, pilot and Fox News contributor. He had popped over to speak to Mattson but ended up staying a few minutes to talk.

"We are open for business, and it's business as usual," Jordan says. "Most of Sonoma County is open for business. You have to understand that 99.9 percent of all visitor experiences are open. You hear burn, burn, burn, but it's not true."

The more my friend and I drive through Sonoma, the more we find that Jordan is absolutely correct. We have dinner at Charlie Palmer's Dry Creek Kitchen. There, we meet and talk to Circe Sher, who we soon learn is president and co-founder of Piazza Hospitality, the company that owns the hotel and restaurant, and Paige Wilcox, a Georgia transplant who manages marketing for the company.

After a wave of cancellations from guests under the wronger-than-wrong impression that Sonoma had slammed shut to visitors, they welcome tourists to come see for themselves. "This is a tourism town," says Wilcox, "and we need the tourism."

## WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

# Next best thing to Santa's workshop

Holiday display company a source of decor for NY area — and beyond

BY KAREN MATTHEWS  
*Associated Press*

**I**nside a massive, nondescript warehouse just north of New York City, it always looks a lot like Christmas. American Christmas in Mount Vernon, N.Y., is essentially a decorations attic for the nation's largest city and the surrounding area and is piled high with every imaginable holiday decoration to adorn city streets and skyscrapers. There are huge ornaments, toy soldiers, wreaths, trees, pine cones and miles of string lights.

Since early November, workers have been busy putting ornaments on trees and packing displays for delivery.

There were 18-foot-tall candy canes ready to be hung like stockings on a West 57th Street office tower, 8-foot-tall pine cones soon to be installed atop the revolving door at the New York Marriott Marquis in Times Square and a glittering basketball headed for the NBA Store on 5th Avenue.

Displays at Radio City Music Hall, Saks Fifth Avenue and Rockefeller Center — except for the giant tree — also are among the 700 separate holiday displays the company is doing this year alone.

"It's the Saks Fifth Avenue and Radio Cities of the world that gain us a lot of attention, but most building lobbies are doing trees, wreaths and garlands," said CEO Fred Schwam. "We'll go and

hang a wreath behind a reception desk and that's the whole job, and then we have some of the biggest displays in the world."

Most of the company's displays are in the New York area, but American Christmas also has installed decorations in 35 cities around the country. It's even put a glittering bow on the Cartier store in Sydney, Australia.

Schwam, who was just 21 when he took over American Christmas in 1988, said he was approached in 2015 by the Innsbruck, Austria-based holiday decoration company MK Illumination about a possible acquisition, and the deal closed just before this year's holiday rush. Schwam said nothing has changed at American Christmas, but the merger should open up more international opportunities.

The company's New York City clients include such stores as Tommy Hilfiger,

Harry Winston and Ferragamo, which has been revamped this year with red, gold and white lights in a crossover design inspired by a strappy sandal from the Italian shoemaker's archives.

Schwam pointed out one of his favorite displays, the string of giant-sized Christmas lights in front of the former McGraw-Hill Building in midtown Manhattan. Schwam said he and the company's creative director were brainstorming one day when they spotted a string of mini-lights. "We looked at it and decided that's the idea; we just need to make it bigger than us."

Many tourists have stopped to take selfies in front of the giant lights.

"At first, I couldn't figure out what it was," said Patty Wilson, of Billings, Mont. "As we came up closer, I saw that it was lights. I think it's very unusual, and it's cool."



PHOTOS BY SETH WENIG/AP

Above: Mount Vernon, N.Y.-based American Christmas — whose CEO is Fred Schwam — is the source for holiday decorations to adorn city streets and skyscrapers.

Above left: Large figurines are stored with other decorations.



At top: A huge wreath is prepared for a client at the American Christmas warehouse.



Above: Dailyn Feliz strings Christmas lights on plastic trees.

Right: Brianna Edwards makes bows in November.

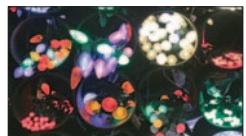


Above: Tanisha Heyward puts the finishing touches on a large Christmas tree at the warehouse in November. American Christmas clients include stores such as Tommy Hilfiger, Harry Winston and Ferragamo.



Above: Decorations are stored, prepared and shipped from the American Christmas warehouse.

Below: Holiday lights at the showroom.



## WEEKEND: MUSIC

# Simple man

## Award-winning country artist Chris Stapleton has a bold plan: Put the music first

BY KRISTIN M. HALL  
Associated Press

**T**hese last few years, Chris Stapleton is often surprised by early-morning texts of congratulations from his friends. Take, for instance, when the Grammy Award nominations were announced.

"That's how I usually find out. People go 'Congratulations' and I go 'What for?'" Stapleton said.

He eventually discovered that he was nominated for three awards, including best country album, best country song and best country solo performance. "That's usually what happens to me because I usually don't know what's going on."

Since his sensational debut solo album, "Traveller," was released in 2015, he's won two Grammy Awards and scores of Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music Awards. The album continued to dominate the country album sales chart this year and has been certified double platinum.

He released two new albums this

year — the Grammy-nominated "From A Room: Volume 1," which came out in May, and "From A Room: Volume 2," which came out Dec. 1.

His success lies in his bold simplicity: His recordings are cut live in the studio with his band; his wife, Morgane, sings harmony; and his producer is Dave Cobb. Stapleton isn't verbose and neither are his lyrics, so it's no surprise that everyone from Adele to Luke Bryan has recorded his songs. "Either Way," which is nominated for best country solo performance, is literally his voice and a guitar.

"I think simple is harder to do than making overly complicated things," Stapleton said. "Much in the way that I think lyrically in songwriting less words can mean more, the same can be true of music. If you can, for lack of a better term, sell a song without putting in extraneous instrumentation ... then that's what serves the song the best."

His touring is an extension of the idea



Morgane  
Stapleton is  
a big part of  
her husband's  
sound.

of putting the music first. On his arena tour this year, he plays on a stage shaped like a half-circle band shell with lights. "While it looks like some science fiction piece, it's a giant diffused light that controls frequency and stage volume," Stapleton explains.

He doesn't use in-ear monitors, those ear buds that allow artists to hear the music, preferring monitors placed on the stage; the stage allows him to better project his music to the seats in the back of the arena.

"I am not trying to make the biggest, most elaborate, pyrotechnic show," Stapleton said. "I am trying to make the show that sounds the best, or best represents what we do onstage. It's all from a sound perspective for me, and then the visual has to fall in line."

Singer-songwriter Kendall Marvel met Stapleton 15 years ago, back when the Kentucky-bred Stapleton was a clean-shaven new songwriter with a short, flat-top haircut. They have written some 60 songs together, including songs

cut by Blake Shelton, Lee Ann Womack and Josh Turner.

Marvel, who co-wrote "Either Way" as well as two other songs on Stapleton's "From A Room: Volume 2," said the husband-and-wife harmony is key to their music. Morgane Stapleton, who is also a songwriter, adds just the right touch of sweetness and softness to his volume and range.

"When you take her out of the equation, he would not be Chris Stapleton," Marvel said. "She is to him and his guitar playing what Leoncavallo player Mickey Raphael is to Willie Nelson."

Stapleton gives a lot of credit to his wife for knowing all the songs in his catalog and picking songs that fans can connect to, like "Broken Halos," another Grammy-nominated song.

That song, which talks about not always understanding why loss happens, has become a tender, comforting moment for many fans, especially after the mass shooting at a country music festival in Las Vegas earlier this year. Stapleton said he wants his fans to attach meaning to his songs that he didn't always intend when he wrote them.

"I want them to have ownership in it, because they do," Stapleton said. "The songs don't really mean as much without them, and without people listening to them and investing in them."

### Chris Stapleton

From A Room, Volume 2  
(Mercury Nashville)

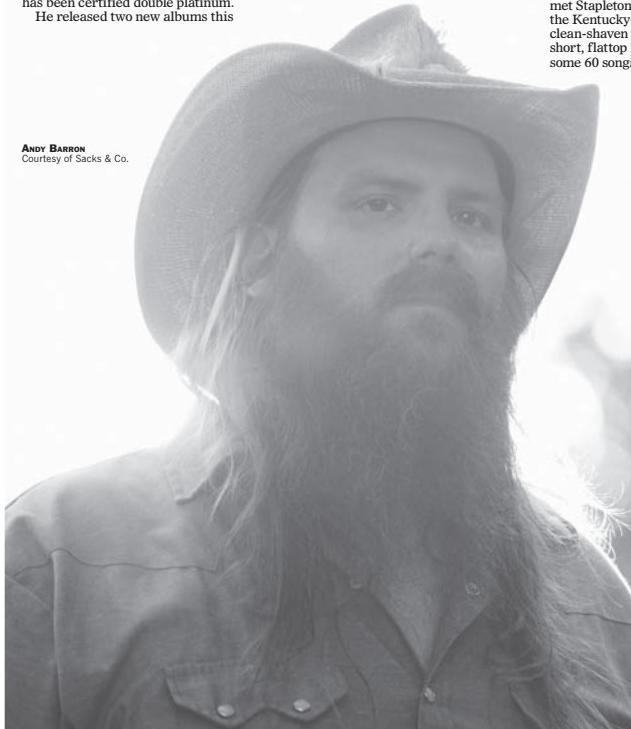
loose with the Waylon-esque honky-tonk of "Hard Livin'" ("This hard livin' ain't as easy as it used to be") and the blazin', blues-inflected rock of

"Midnight Train to Memphis." But he's equally adept at more intimate, acoustic-textured numbers that range from

the arrestingly dark imagery of "Scarecrow in the Garden" ("There's a Bible in my left hand and a pistol in my right") to the resolute positivity in the face of quotidian struggles found in "A Simple Song" ("I love my life ... The kids and the dogs and you and me").

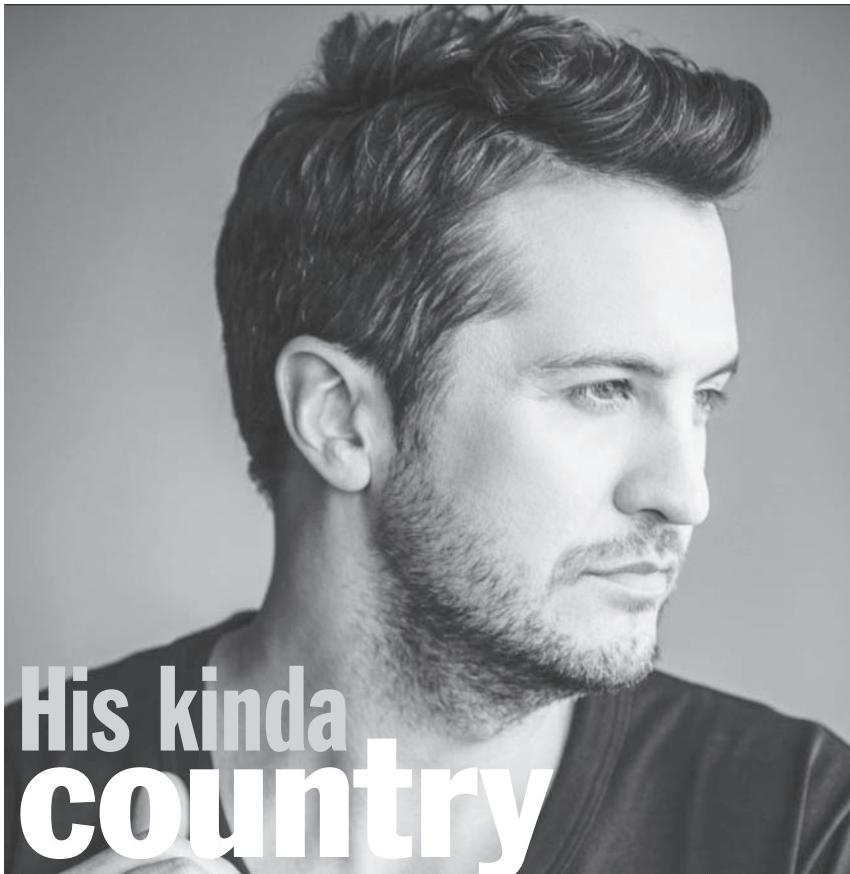
— Nick Cristiano  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

ANDY BARRON  
Courtesy of Sacks & Co.



Here, Stapleton again cuts

## WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS



# His kinda country

Whatever you call his music, Luke Bryan is in fine form

If Luke Bryan has faced criticism from some country purists that his anthems aren't true to the music form's roots, he's got an answer — a polite one, mind you — for them.

The opening title song on his new 15-track album, "What Makes You Country," offers a welcoming, big-tent view of the genre: it includes cowboys in Texas, hunters in Georgia and folks hauling bales or fishing or "covered in peanut dust."

The message is clear — whether country is in your blood or you were converted by a song on the radio, don't judge. "You do your kinda country / I do my kinda country," he sings.

Bryan's country is playful, inclusive, flirty and good-natured on the album. He's still knocking back a few ("Hung-over in a Hotel Room," "Drinking Again" (and later a cutout-outfit to Beyoncé with the lyric "drunk in love")) — but his optimism is undiluted by booze.

Few other people could sing the sappy ("Most People Are Good") and get away with it. (Also, he gets kudos for the apparent embrace of same-sex couples, a logical



**Luke Bryan**

What Makes  
You Country  
(Capitol Nashville)

extension of his big tent inclusiveness: "I believe you love who you love / Ain't nothing you should ever be ashamed of!"

The album sags somewhat in the middle — "Sunrise, Sunburn, Sunset," "Bad Lovers" and "She's a Hot One" are a little weak — but Bryan roars back with the sweet and fatherly "Pick It Up" and the sexy rocker "Driving This Thing."

"What Makes You Country" feels like a natural extension of 2015's "Kill the Lights" and is filled with tunes you'll be stomping along with long before they've even finished their first spin. One of the highlights is "Light It Up," in which he confesses he anxiously checks his cellphone every few minutes for word back from a lover: "I get so neurotic about it, baby."

Bryan also gets a songwriting credit on seven of the songs — and they're among the strongest. Call what he does whatever you like — modern-country, bro-country, arena-country or crossover-country — Bryan is not going to have trouble getting his calls returned.

— Mark Kennedy  
Associated Press

Photo courtesy of  
Red Light Management



### Neil Young + Promise Of The Real

The Visitor (Reprise)

It's nice to hear Neil Young laugh.

Sure, it sounds a little maniacal as he cackles during the wacky eight-minute epic "Carnival," the centerpiece of his new album, "The Visitor." But it's a sign that Young has every intention of surviving the current state of the world with his sense of humor intact.

Like his past two albums "The Monsanto Years" and "Peace Trail," "The Visitor" is political and with songs like "When Bad Got Good" ("Lock him up! He lies. You lie. Lock him up!") is the chant) and "Already Great" ("You're already great! You're the promised land, the helping hand") is the chorus; it's pretty clear Young is upset by President Trump.

His more universal anthems are actually more effective, whether it's the snarling blues of the straightforward "Diggin' a Hole," where backing band Promise of the Real really shines, or the uplifting "Children of Destiny," where he encourages people to "Stand up for what you believe, resist the powers that be."

With "The Visitor," Young offers both rage and a way through it, a musical blueprint for moving forward.

— Glenn Gamboa  
Newsday



### Jaden Smith

Syre (MSFTS Music/Roc Nation)

First, forget that "Syre" is the debut album from one of Will Smith's kids; Jaden: a young actor and singer-rapper in his own right who has recorded many a guest feature and mixtape long before this. If you're not paying attention to birthright, "Syre" is a deliciously low-key, exquisitely eccentric — even cinematic — hip-hop nu-soul effort. Syre is good, not great, and certainly promising for the 19-year-old Smith. Just keep it low-down and deep.

— A.D. Amorosi  
The Philadelphia Inquirer

## WEEKEND: BOOKS

# The dog at the center of it all

## 'Celebrating Snoopy' puts spotlight on Charlie Brown's pet beagle

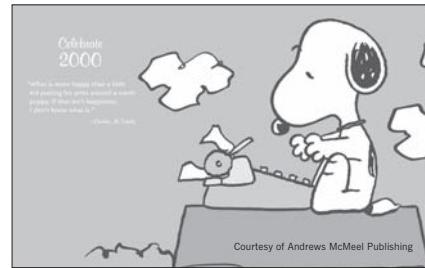
By MICHAEL TISSERAND

Special to The Washington Post

**G**rowing up in the early 1970s, I drew Snoopy constantly. I started young, depicting Snoopy on his doghouse as three small white hills on a red triangle. Before long, I graduated to Snoopy as a Flying Ace with a helmet and scarf.

Like too many kids, I eventually gave up the pleasures of drawing, but Snoopy served as a vital introduction to an unleashed imagination. While Charlie Brown dodges kite-eating trees and gets sucker-punched into football pranks, his dog soars, swoops, battles, dances, shuffles and, best of all, writes. While Charlie Brown leans against a wall and discusses theology, Snoopy relishes the joys of make-believe.

This is made abundantly clear in the massive new anthology "Celebrating Snoopy." Editors Alexia Fajardo and Dorothy O'Brien offer a unique retelling of Charles M. Schulz's "Peanuts" by omitting strips that don't feature Snoopy in a significant role. So instead of starting with the famous Oct. 2, 1950 image of Shermey commenting, "Good ol' Charlie Brown ... How I hate him!" "Celebrating Snoopy" launches with the strip published two days later: Snoopy proudly walks down the sidewalk with a tall flower in his collar and is accidentally watered by Patty. In



Courtesy of Andrews McMeel Publishing

the final panel, both flower and Snoopy's mood are wilted. The next comic presented here — a strip originally published Oct. 20, 1950 — shows Snoopy popping out of a jack-in-the-box. It's his first impersonation, and he never looks back.

This is not the first "Peanuts" anthology to spotlight Snoopy. His Flying Ace adventures were recounted in "Snoopy vs. The Red Baron," and his career as an author was honored in the lovely "Snoopy's Guide to the Writing Life." But the oversized and colorful "Celebrating Snoopy" is the most ambitious move to put Snoopy at the center of all activity in the "Peanuts" universe — which is surely how Snoopy would have preferred it.

Of course, we know otherwise. "The Complete Peanuts," which set the gold standard in publishing archival collections of long-running strips, makes clear that "Peanuts" always was an ensemble show. This fact is underscored by the new "Complete Peanuts Family Album," a one-volume encyclopedia of more than 70 "Peanuts" characters, ranging from the iconic to the obscure. Along with a treasure of "Peanuts" ephemera, this wonderful collection offers first-appearance strips and smart essays by Andrew Farago covering everyone from Cormac to Truffles, and other names that even longtime "Peanuts" fans might not recognize.

Like any good encyclopedia,

"The Complete Peanuts Family Album" can be browsed at will, starting at any page. "Celebrating Snoopy," however, should be read chronologically to fully appreciate the evolutionary leaps of the dog at the center of it all. Aided by Fajardo's brief but instructive essays, we see Snoopy first as an amusing neighborhood puppy — sort of a comic-strip version of Petey from "The Little Rascals" — only to quickly transform into an entirely different being. For Snoopy, change begins in the form of a thought, and that thought is how miserable it is to be a dog," Fajardo writes. By the mid-1950s, Snoopy had begun trying on new personas: There sits the dog on the croquet pole, thinking himself a vulture. In 1958, Snoopy ascends his doghouse for the first time. From that point on, neither his life nor ours will be quite the same.

"The best thing I ever thought of was Snoopy using his own imagination," Schulz once said. The transformation was evident from the start. In 1957, Hugh Morrow wrote in the Saturday Evening Post, "Snoopy of late has taken to dancing on his hind legs, thereby achieving a certain superiority over the children because he is able, while dancing, to ignore them."

For anyone who has ever looked at a dog's twitching paws and wondered just what was going on in that mind, Snoopy



provides all the best answers. And as David Michaelis reveals in "Schulz and Peanuts," Snoopy's fantasy life also offered glimpses into Schulz's own life and passions. Such was the case in 1966, when a fire in Schulz's studio inspired a series in which Snoopy's doghouse burns down. While Charlie Brown worries about the insurance policy and Lucy insists the tragedy is punishment for various sins, Snoopy quietly walks over to the charred remains, pauses and climbs back on top of what's left of his rooftop.

More than a half-century later, "Peanuts" fans would recall this story upon hearing that wildfires were threatening the Charles M. Schulz Museum and Research Center in Santa Rosa, Calif. His widow, Jean Schulz, lost her home to the blaze, but the museum and its treasures were spared. With all the spirit of Snoopy climbing back on top of his doghouse, the museum has since reopened. It's yet another reminder of the enduring qualities bestowed by one of our greatest cartoonists on a most uncommon dog.

# The books our members of Congress are reading

By STEVE ISRAEL

Special to The Washington Post

**W**hen I used to visit troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, I liked to ask an unexpected question: "What are you reading?" The responses weren't much different on the battlefield than at my local shopping mall. Lots of thrillers (Patterson, DeMille, Clancy), hobby magazines, continuing education texts and "nothing really, sir" — except nobody called me "sir" at the mall.

But what about the political battlefield in Washington, where every day is another bombshell? Which books offer our lawmakers insight, knowledge and, yes, escape? I asked my former Democratic and Republican congressional colleagues to name the titles they have most enjoyed reading this year.

Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio: "How To Fight," by Thich Nhat Hanh. Always instructive on staying grounded personally and professionally. He understands so well the suffering of others.

Rep. Tom Cole, R-Oka.: Two great books for "fun": David Grann's "Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI" and Kyle Harper's "The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire."

Rep. Charlie Dent, R-Pa.: I've always been intrigued by World War II and the events leading up to it. Erik Larson's "In the Garden of Beasts" is the fascinating

perspective of the American ambassador to Berlin, William Dodd, in the 1930s during the run-up to war. His insider knowledge about Hitler's Germany is definitely worth reading.

Rep. Anna G. Eshoo, D-Calif.: "Journal of a Soul" by Pope John XXIII. I read it years ago but needed something uplifting, so I went back to it.

Rep. Matthew Cartwright, D-Pa.: David McCullough's "The Wright Brothers." I like it because it's about tackling ridiculously hard, scary problems and figuring

out how to solve them.

Rep. Denny Heck, D-Wash.: "Fading Shadows," by William Chance. This is part memoir and part history of a high school dropout who lies about his age and serves in the Korean War at age 15. Many years later, Chance earned his Ph.D. and became a higher-education policy expert of national repute.

Rep. Barbara Lee, D-Calif.: "Before I Forget," by B. Smith and Dan Gasby. About an African-American woman's struggle with Alzheimer's. She had restaurants in D.C. at Union Station and in New York. Alzheimer's research related to African-Americans has been absent. I'm a member of the appropriations subcommittee on labor, health and human services.

I've led efforts for increased funding on health disparities research regarding people of color. This book is very well-written, informative and helps me make the case.

Rep. Ted Lieu, D-Calif.: I am reading the "Nebula Awards Showcase 2017: The Year's Best Science Fiction and Fantasy" because the truth coming out of the White House is weirder than science fiction.

Rep. Sean Maloney, D-N.Y.: "The Plot Against America," by Philip Roth. Reason Duh. And that's on the record.

Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Fla.: "Best. Ever.: A Florida Man Defends His Homeland," by Dave Barry, and "Oh, Florida!: How America's Weirdest State Influences the Rest of the Country," by Craig Pittman.

Rep. Joe Kennedy, D-Mass.: The book that probably affected me most of late is "When Breath Becomes Air," by Paul Kalanithi. It's about as gut-wrenching as it gets, but asks important questions about priorities, quality of life and our health-care system.

Rep. Adam Schiff, D-Calif.: I like to be reading a work of fiction and nonfiction at the same time. The former is a great escape from the stresses of the day, and the latter contributes to what we know about history. Pierce Brown's Red Rising series is like

"Game of Thrones" set in space. If you want all the mayhem of the House of Lannister in low gravity, this is the series for you. Imaginative and witty.

Rep. Beto O'Rourke, D-Texas: "The Iliad" right now for no particular reason other than it's a great book.

Sen. Claire McCaskill, D-Mo.: "Manhattan Beach," by Jennifer Egan. I love historical fiction, especially when it features nontraditional strong women heroines. This one is determined to be a diver repairing ships in New York's harbor during WWII. Secrets and double-crossing on a personal level kept me turning the pages.

Rep. Eric Swalwell, D-Calif.: "How the Good Guys Finally Won: Notes From an Impeachment Summer" by Jimmy Breslin. I don't think we need a description as to why I'm reading it.

And, in what is truly the most bipartisan and collegial response, here's Rep. Billy Long, R-Mo.: Actually just finished "Giant of the Senate," by Al Franken, and now I'm reading Charlie Kennedy's new "Baby Kennedy." Big Steve Israel and Joe Kennedy fan, too.

Israel is a former U.S. representative for New York's 3rd District and the author of the forthcoming novel "Big Guns."

# WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

## NEW ON DVD

**"Detroit":** Director Kathryn Bigelow showed a great ability to equally address the political and personal sides of the stories in "The Hurt Locker" and "Zero Dark Thirty." Too much attention either way would have undermined the films. Bigelow shows no such balance with "Detroit," and her film based on the true story of the violence of white Detroit police officers in the summer of 1967 comes across more like a horror movie than a sociological thriller. The imbalance distracts from the serious story of the riots that tore the city apart at that time. Instead of offering insights into the events, the movie is dominated by the insane bigotry displayed by one out-of-control policeman played by Will Poulter. His work in "Detroit" is so maniacal he looks like his character wandered over from a horror movie set just to disrupt what should have been a powerful indictment on society.



TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX/AP

**Taron Egerton, left, Colin Firth and Pedro Pascal star in the recent DVD release "Kingsman: The Golden Circle."**

**"Kingsman: The Golden Circle":** The first film, "Kingsman: The Secret Service" had a fun charm about it, as if a James Bond thriller had been mashed up with an Austin Powers tale. But the emphasis was always on the spy story. This sequel cares less about the spy story and more about mixing as many unrelated elements as possible. There are still some fun moments, but this follow-up effort no longer has the license to be killer entertainment. Director Matthew Vaughn, who was also a co-writer of the script, just doesn't put in the same balance of fun and guns as he did the first time. The movie about a secret spy ring, hidden away behind a London tailor, stumbles as it reaches across the pond to the American version of the agency.

**"Luke Cage: The Complete First Season":** Netflix has launched several series based on characters from the Marvel Comics universe, including this one about an experiment gone bad that leaves Luke Cage with super strength and unbreakable skin. The man-mountain of a hero played by Mike Colter was introduced in the Netflix series "Jessica Jones." Cage is the best of the lot that also features Daredevil, Iron Fist and the Punisher. That's because Colter not only is very believable when he's doing the superhero stuff, but he also brings a deep humanity to the role. He doesn't play Cage as a cavalier champion of the people but as a man who knows he's been given a gift to be a defender of the oppressed.

Also new on DVD Dec. 12:  
**"Mysteries of China":** Visual adventure that shows the growth of the nation through aerial photography and time lapse techniques.

**"Wolf Warrior II":** Chinese soldier takes on special mission in Africa to protect medical aid workers.

**"Doc Martin: Series 8":** Martin Clunes returns in the British comedy.

**"Bad Luck Goat":** Two teenagers try to atomic for accidentally killing a goat.

**"Game of Thrones: The Complete Seventh Season":** The latest season of the massive hit for HBO includes the most-watched season opener and finale in the premium cable channel's history.

—Rick Bentley/Tribune Content Agency



TBS/TNS

**"Search Party"** is a dark comedy television series. It stars Alia Shawkat. "The show is making fun of millennials in a very specific way," Shawkat says. "The characters are unlikeable, but you end up caring about them because you begin to see why they are who they are. There is more to them than what you first see, or don't see."

## Star of 'Search Party' has an audience for her happily offbeat qualities

BY LORRAINE ALI  
Los Angeles Times

**A**lia Shawkat swears the baby grand piano in her living room isn't for show, just as the paint splatters on her orange corduroy jeans aren't a fashion statement. She's a classically trained pianist who's learning to play jazz and a self-taught artist who shows her work at small galleries in Los Angeles and New York. "They're not props, but I understand why people might think they are," she says and laughs. "I was a child actor. I'm on a [sitcom]. We're in Hollywood. It all must be for effect."

Normally, yes. But Shawkat, 28, who got her start as Maebly Funke on the beloved Fox show "Arrested Development" and is now the star of TBS' sleeper hit "Search Party," didn't forge her career by acting like, well, an actor.

Shawkat and her "Search Party" character, Dory, often appear reticent to draw attention to themselves, even if both stand out with their dramatic black, curly hair, intense gaze and smattering of freckles. Neither fit the traditional mold for a showstopping star or character.

But that's Shawkat's charm — turning the awkward and understated into memorable characters that rise above the fray.

"There's always a new wave of starlets or a new type of Girl they want to represent, and I wasn't either of those," Shawkat says of her early introduction to acting with a role on "Arrested Development" at age 14. "I was cute, but not that typical pretty, straight hair, skinny thing. I was a little different. Now, that's all the rage. It's almost commoditized: 'You're different. We love that!'"

Thanks to TV's embrace of weird, "Search Party" has given it niche as a slow-growing mystery-comedy for disaffected millennials and jaded Nancy

Drew fans. Now in its second season, the half-hour series certainly would have been an outlier if it hadn't debuted in 2015 when a furious expansion of programming meant more unconventional concepts were greenlighted.

The show, with a cast of relative unknowns and created by filmmakers Sarah-Violet Bliss, Charles Rogers and Michael Showalter, follows four self-centered friends through New York City and up the East Coast as they try to solve the mystery of a missing woman.

Dory leads the charge, which we learn is entirely uncharacteristic for the recent college grad whose aimlessness is topped only by her ability to remain practically invisible in plain sight. No wonder she's bent on finding a woman no one else seems to remember even existed at their old college.

She's flanked by her pragmatically boring boyfriend, Drew (John Reynolds), and her narcissistic friends Elliott (John Early) and Portia (Meredith Hagner). The crew, who are all more familiar with martinis than magnifying glasses, each add a level of dysfunctional hilarity to the mix.

"The show is making fun of millennials in a very specific way," says Shawkat, sitting in the living room of her Hollywood Hills, Calif., home, smoking a cigarette and playing with a loose thread on her vintage gold blazer. On the far wall hangs an oil painting of the "Search Party" four, done in the style of an old Nancy Drew book cover. "The characters are unlikeable, but you end up caring about them because you begin to see why they are who they are. There is more to them than what you first see, or don't see."

A role like Dory wasn't easy to find, says Shawkat, who was disillusioned by the parts available to her after "Arrested Development" was canceled by Fox in 2006 when she was 18. She struggled to

make the transition from child actor to an adult with nuanced roles.

"I kept getting sent out for TV shows as the snarky, too-smart-for-herself girl, but they weren't well written," Shawkat says. "My agents said get feedback like, 'They said you sound like you didn't want to be there.' And it was like, yeah, because I didn't. I was so bitter."

Shawkat grew up in Palm Springs, Calif., with her father, an Iraqi immigrant, and mother, the Anglo-American daughter of television actor Paul Burke. Her parents, she says, did not encourage her to act. It was something she gravitated toward at an early age, and her mother acquiesced by helping her find an agent and driving her the two-plus hours to Hollywood for casting calls.

It wasn't a coincidence that Shawkat landed one of her first roles as an Iraqi war victim in the 1999 film "Three Kings." They were looking for actors who could pass as Arabs, and her dad eventually helped with dialogue and had the part in the film.

After "Arrested Development" and a brief stint at Sarah Lawrence College, she struggled to find satisfying roles while she watched her former costar Michael Cera star in "Superbad."

Her determination to turn down roles she felt would pigeonhole her eventually paid off. Her career kicked into gear when she costarred in the immigrant tale "Amreeka," then with Ellen Page in "Whip It" and more indie films and critically acclaimed projects before "Search Party" came along.

She was a bit surprised when the show, which she says was shot like an independent film, got picked up.

"I had low expectations, because everything I think is good doesn't get the right attention," Shawkat says. "The pilot was so great, I was worried. But it's grown really naturally."

## WEEKEND: HEALTH AND FITNESS

## 'It's win-win'

Eating for your health also better for the environment, study shows

BY DEBORAH NETBURN  
Los Angeles Times

**S**o, you want to reduce your carbon footprint? You might consider improving your diet.

It turns out that healthy eating isn't just good for your body, it can also lessen your impact on the environment.

Scientists say that food production including growing crops, raising livestock, fishing and transporting all that food to our plates is responsible for 20 percent to 30 percent of total global greenhouse gas emissions.

In addition, 33 percent of the ice-free land on our planet is being used to grow our food, researchers say.

But altering our diets could change that.

A new study published Dec. 4 in PNAS found that if citizens in 28 high-income nations such as the United States, Germany and Japan actually followed the dietary recommendations of their respective governments, greenhouse gases related to the production of the food they eat would fall by 13 percent to 25 percent.

At the same time, the amount of land it takes to produce that food could drop by as much as 17 percent.

"At least in high-income countries, a healthier diet leads to a healthier environment," said Paul Behrens, an environmental scientist at Leiden University in the Netherlands who led the work. "It's win-win."

To come to this conclusion, Behrens turned to Exiobase, a massive input-output database that represents the entire world economy. It allowed him to track not only the environmental cost of growing and raising the various types of food we consume, but also the cost of the machinery involved in the production of that food, and the cost of getting it into our supermarkets and eventually onto our plates.

The database also takes into account that some countries are more efficient at producing food than others. For example, growing tomatoes in England takes more energy than growing them in Spain, where it is warmer. Similarly, a steak from a grain-fed cow in England has a smaller environmental footprint than one from a grass-fed cow in Australia.

"It's superb that we have this information," Behrens said. "You can trace the impact of any consumption across the world."

For this study, Behrens gathered data on the average diets of people living in 39 countries as well as the dietary recommendations put out by governments in those countries. To make sure the results represented the recommended ways of eating and not just eating less, he kept the calorie counts of both diets the same, and only altered the percentage of the different food groups that people actually eat, and how much their governments suggest they eat.

Next, he fed those data points into Exiobase and compared the outcome.

Specifically, he looked at three ways the environment is affected by our diets — greenhouse gas emissions, land use and eutrophication, which is the addition of nutrients to water sources that can lead to toxic algae blooms and lack of oxygen in the water. Eutrophication is usually caused by the discharge of animal waste (dung) and plant fertilizer.

The results were far from uniform, but in broad strokes, he found that the wealthiest countries would lower their environmental impact if their citizens followed nationally recommended diets, primarily because most of these recommendations call for a significant reduction in the amount of meat citizens consume.

"In general, meat is worse than other types of food because every time something eats something else, you get a loss of energy," Behrens said. "Eating any animal is going to have more of an impact compared to other food groups."

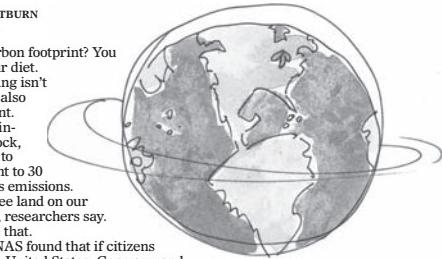
Poorer countries, mostly from India and Indonesia would see their environmental impact go up, mostly because the nationally recommended diets call for more calories than many citizens consume in those countries.

Still, the overall effect, if everyone followed nationally recommended diets, would be a decrease in greenhouse gases, eutrophication and land use, he said.

A few countries, including Britain, Switzerland and China, have acknowledged that their dietary recommendations will also help create a healthier Earth, but that message is rarely conveyed to citizens, Behrens said.

He thinks it's a lost opportunity.

"Dietary recommendations can be a great way to talk about human health and the health of the environment," he said. "The main point is you can win both ways."



The Orange County (Calif.) Register illustration



TOM VAN DYKE/Chicago Tribune

**R**esearchers analyzed 15 studies — most of which lasted around a decade or more — to determine how eating cheese affected the risk of cardiovascular disease, coronary heart disease and stroke.

## Daily cheese linked to a lower risk of heart disease

BY ARIEL SCOTTI  
New York Daily News

**A**nibble of cheese a day keeps the heart disease away.

A recent analysis of more than 200,000 people showed that those who ate a little bit of cheese every day were less likely to develop heart disease compared to those who rarely or never ate it at all. The researchers from China and the Netherlands examined data compiled from 15 previous studies where most of the participants were tracked for at least 10 years.

Overall, those who ate more cheese had a 14 percent lower risk of developing heart disease and were 10 percent less likely to have a stroke than their cheese-averse peers. But experts warn that the findings were not linear — meaning the study does not advocate eating enormous quantities of cheese. People who seemed to have health benefits from cheese ate about 40 grams a day or a square the size of a matchbook.

"This is not the same as eating a big slice of cheesy pizza every day," director of aortic surgery at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai Medical Center, Dr. Allan Stewart, who was not involved in the study, told *Time*. "But the findings were certainly different from what people might expect."

The dairy product contains healthful ingredients like calcium, protein and probiotics, said the authors of a new study published in the European Journal of Nutrition. But cheese, like other milk-based products, contains high levels of saturated fat — which can cause high cholesterol and an increased risk of heart disease.

In the study, cheese was only found to have an association with lowered health risks, not a direct cause and effect. The link might be because people who eat cheese daily are already healthier or because they have disposable income, the researchers said. But the good might outweigh the bad with cheese.

"Cheese can be high in probiotics, which tend to put you in less of an inflammatory state," Stewart said. "There is some evidence that cheese — as a substitute for milk, for example — might actually have a protective effect on the heart. No one's saying you should definitely go out and eat 40 grams of cheese a day. But on the upside, a bit of cheese on a cracker doesn't sound unreasonable."

## WEEKEND: FAMILY

**By LINDSEY M. ROBERTS**  
Special to The Washington Post

**W**hen family life counselor Kim John Payne published "Simplicity Parenting: Using the Extraordinary Power of Less to Raise Calmer, Happier and More Secure Kids" in 2009, he was warning us about how our supersized lives were affecting our kids. He was seeing kids who were unable to play by themselves in rooms full of toys, throwing frequent tantrums caused by overscheduling, and being diagnosed with behavioral disorders they didn't have. He knew something needed to change.

"The too much, too soon, too sexy, too young — it's become ubiquitous," he says.

It turns out he was onto something with that "less is more" approach, particularly when it comes to holiday toys. Each year, as minimalism grows in popularity, Payne sees more parents embracing the call for less stuff and more time together.

For a few ideas on how to give children more meaningful gifts this year, we talked to Payne, as well as a lifestyle blogger inspired by simplicity parenting, a mother of seven who recently downsized her life, an author of parenting books and a psychologist who studies gift giving. Here are their suggestions.

Erin Boyle, creator of the site Reading My Tea Leaves and author of the book "Simple Matters," gets more questions about her posts on her gift strategy for children than almost anything else. She likes to follow the idea of giving just four presents: one gift the child wants, one gift to read, one gift to wear, and one gift he or she needs. (Substitute a category for "do" if you want to include an experience.)

Those who have children are their guides, says Boyle, who lives in New York. "So if we show excitement over chocolate in a stocking, they're not going to look around the room for more things."

She suggests starting a minimalist gifting strategy at a young age and spreading the word to friends and family.

"Messaging from the beginning is important, having super-frank conversations with family and friends, and being willing to be a little weird. ... If simplicity is your goal, it's possible."

If loved ones don't adhere to your plan, you should still be gracious about all gifts received, she notes.

"Say 'thank you' and then decide over time if it's something you want to keep in your house," she says.

While on a mission trip to Africa last Christmas, Jennifer Pepito and her family of nine decided they wanted to devote more resources to traveling. The founder of the Peaceful Press, a company that creates a curriculum for home-school families, Pepito didn't want to buy her kids even more toys that she'd step on or need to pick up.

After deciding to focus on experiences rather than things, she and her husband sold their house in California and bought a smaller fixer-upper. They saved enough money on housing and property taxes to take a two-week trip to Italy for the holidays this year. On Christmas, she'll have small gifts for the kids. But the real gift is seeing the world together. Her Christmas budget includes enough room for "gelato, bread, pizza, more bread, wine and



# THE GIFT OF simplicity

**Experts suggest a less-is-more approach to holiday celebrations**

museum entrance fees," she says.

However, experience gifts don't have to be big, costly trips. Karen Pine, a professor at the University of Hertfordshire in Britain who studies the psychology of gift giving, says that "more than anything, kids love attention from their parents and time together."

Pool the money spent on gifts and put it toward an experience that everyone can enjoy. Try a day hike with dad or a weekend with mom doing an activity the child chooses.

Try creating a family ritual around giving. Jenn Mann, author of "The A to Z Guide to Raising Happy, Confident Kids," and her family celebrate Hanukkah. Their first-night tradition is that each child gets three pieces of paper with a description of a charity she thinks they might like. They get to choose which one they want to give to.

"It's good to get kids thinking outside of their own wants and needs, especially during the holidays," she says. "These kinds of rituals bring families closer together and send really positive messages to kids."

For Christmas, this could be done with a wrapped box for older kids with a few charities inside for them to choose from. If you want to give

a charitable gift to others, make sure it's a cause the recipient cares about. To learn more about a charity you are considering supporting, check out Charity Navigator ([charitynavigator.org/](http://charitynavigator.org/)).

"Give them something that they can pour their creativity into," Payne says. "A toy that is fairly simple, that doesn't do very much, that is in itself fairly plain."

He likes to give kids a box of five big pieces of dyed muslin cloth, perhaps including one that is shiny and another that is dark. Kids turn these into houses, princess gowns, "all manner of things ... that provide hours of play," he says. "The plainer the toy, the simpler the toy, the more creative the play and then the more collaborative the play." It's an idea that Payne's simplicity parenting coaches have seen work well around the world. For older kids, Payne suggests a guitar, basketball backboard, or even the building materials and tools to make a bike or skateboard ramp.

It's normal for kids in other countries to have tool kits to play and work with, or their own workshop areas. Gifts such as these have more longevity than the latest "it" toy or gadget.

## THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



# Hope, cheer and ruthless behavior

**D**uring this season of giving, people everywhere are transformed. Generosity and compassion well up in us all. However, in the midst of all this merriment, otherwise charitable people can become so caught up in materialistic desires that they have thoughts of theft, revenge and even murder.

What, pray tell, could arouse criminal tendencies during the holidays? Simple: group gift exchanges.

Known as Yankee Swaps, White Elephant Exchanges or Dirty Santas, this apparently innocent holiday game rouses merciless thievery and selfish materialism in even the most virtuous of participants.

Case in point: My last military wives' bunco group held an ornament exchange every December. The members carefully selected items that were unique, handmade or artistic to contribute to the pool of gifts.

One year, the class clown in me couldn't resist when I saw glass-blown German ornaments delicately shaped into acorns and walnuts. I bought one of each, envisioning the hysterical laughter that would erupt when, as the recipient opened my package, I would blurt out a joke of questionable taste involving the word "nuts."

We arrived at the hostess' home at the designated hour and placed our tiny packages under her sparkling tree. Wine glasses filled, chitchat ensued and we were all enjoying the festive atmosphere.

A while later, we were filling up on hot dip and red and green M&Ms when the hostess called us into the living room to start the ornament exchange. Light laughter trailed along as we plodded onto couches and chairs.

We had no idea of the carnage about to befall our unsuspecting group.

After drawing numbers, the game began. The first two women picked from the wrapped gifts under the tree. One by one, they gently unraveled tissue paper from their chosen ornaments. Eyes darted around the room and brains calculated. Just seconds before, we were more interested in cranberry cream cheese spread, but now that merchandise was involved, we began to strategize.

Not wanting to cause any drama, I also selected a wrapped ornament from under the tree when it was my turn. This might have continued, turn after turn, until all the packages were opened and accounted for, but someone suddenly cried "Steal!" and mouths burst to water. "Yeah, it's no fun if we just pick the wrapped gifts, you've got to steal!" another added.

A chant ensued, "Steal! Steal! Steal!" as the next woman rose from her seat. A tiny girl could be seen on her face as she lunged toward her friend's lap, containing the already unwrapped wooden ornament. We erupted in hoots and applause. Seething with vengeance, the victim of the theft plotted her retribution.

The scene quickly turned from one of merriment to mayhem as my fellow military spouses became an unruly mob. The women ruthlessly snatched ornaments one by one, while our host tried to maintain order. "Now, remember, the gift is DEAD after it's stolen three times."

The mere mention of death only ignited more savagery. When one woman stole the wooden ornament for the third time, the group shouted, "It's DEAD, it's DEAD!" and I thought I heard gnashing of teeth as if she were carrying a bloody carcass back to the den.

With all the stolen ornaments dead, the last participant had no choice — she had to pick the lone gift left under the tree. It was the box of ornaments I had brought, and as she revealed them, I weakly offered my pre-planned inappropriate nut joke. The woman, still wounded from battle, could only force a bogus chuckle.

As we all said goodnight, I realized that we had just waged an epic war over meaningless trinkets that could be bought for less than \$10 at any local store. The shameless displays of latent aggression and irreparably hurt feelings could have all been easily avoided.

But perhaps humans who wouldn't dream of committing theft and murder simply can't resist the thrilling temptation of crime in the midst of delicious home-baked cookies and sparkling twinkle lights.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: [themeatandpotatoesofflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesofflife.com)  
Email: [metapandpotatoesofflife@googlemail.com](mailto:metapandpotatoesofflife@googlemail.com)

# WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

## NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

### FULL-BODY CAST

BY ERIK AGARD AND LAURA BRAUNSTEIN / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

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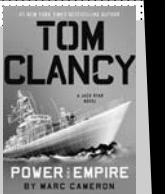
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Jack Ryan is dealing with an aggressive challenge from the Chinese government. Pawns are being moved around a global chessboard: an attack on an oil platform in Africa, a terrorist strike on an American destroyer and a storm tossed American spy ship that may fall into Chinese hands. But there are hints that there's even more going on behind the scenes.



## RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



# FACES



JOEL C RYAN, INVISION/AP

# 'All of those moments, it's otherworldly'

**Kelly Marie Tran's unexpected road to 'The Last Jedi'**

BY PETER SBLENDORIO  
New York Daily News

**B**efore she joined the Star Wars universe, Kelly Marie Tran nearly lost all hope she'd ever make it as an actress.

Tran — who plays newcomer Rose Tico in the upcoming "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" — had been mired in a full-time office job a few years ago and was regularly attending casting auditions that never led to her big break.

But any time she thought of quitting, she used her parents' struggles as an inspiration. "My parents are both refugees from Vietnam, and they spent their whole lives working towards a reality where my sisters and I would have choice," Tran, 28, told the Daily News. "That was purely it. My parents never had the luxury of having a dream."

"I remember thinking I was living for multiple generations, and if I wasn't pursuing something that made me happy, if I wasn't really living to my fullest, then I wouldn't really be doing them justice."

Her persistence paid off in an astronomical way in 2015, when "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" director Rian Johnson cast her as Rose following a five-month audition process.

Tran's working-class journey some-

what mirrors that of her character, as Rose works a non-glorious job as a maintenance worker for the Resistance before embarking on an adventure with John Boyega's Finn. "She's someone who is used to being in the background of the Resistance, and in this movie ... she kind of gets pulled to the forefront of it," Tran said.

Rose is the first major female Asian character in a "Star Wars" movie — a reality Tran views as an honor and a responsibility since the character provides representation for a new demographic of fans. The entire experience has been a dream come true for Tran, even though she'd never watched a Star Wars movie in its entirety when she auditioned.

"I do think from the bottom of my heart that it was the best thing that has ever happened to me," Tran said of not seeing the movies beforehand. "Because I hadn't seen these films, I was able to create an honest character and somehow I don't feel was influenced by the enormity of what this franchise already is."

Tran has since watched the movies, and come to appreciate being part of the galaxy. "Walking on that set, even that first day, and being in my costume and having my hair and makeup done, and then turning and seeing Finn, and then seeing Poe, and then seeing C-3PO and getting a hug from C-3PO," Tran said. "All of those moments, it's otherworldly."



**Kelly Marie Tran — above at the London premiere of "Star Wars: The Last Jedi" on Tuesday — stars as Rose and John Boyega is Finn in the film, now in theaters.**

DISNEY/TNS

## Tidal reportedly losing millions; could run out of cash within months

Jay-Z's Tidal might be on the verge of sinking.

The music streaming service is reportedly losing money to the tune of tens of millions of dollars per year, and might not have enough dough to stick around for another six months, Norwegian newspaper Dagens Næringsliv reports.

The outlet claims that since the rapper purchased Tidal in 2015, it's lost around \$60 million — \$44 million of which came in 2016 alone.

Still, Tidal reportedly claims it's on track to turn a profit in mid-2018.

A spokesperson for the company dismissed the report to the Daily News, and said, "Tidal has been battling bad press since the very beginning. "We have experienced negative stories about Tidal since its inception and we have done nothing but grow the business each year," the spokesperson told The News in a statement.

The report comes nearly one year after Sprint purchased a 33 percent stake in the company for \$200 million. At the time, Jay-Z's business partner Juan Perez reportedly claimed Sprint's investment would give the company "working capital" for the next year to year and a half, according to DN.

From highly publicized beef with Kanye West to legal drama, the streaming service has been plagued with controversy since Jay-Z bought it in 2015 for \$56 million.

### Other news

■ Pat DiNizio, who as lead singer and songwriter for the New Jersey band the Smithereens blended pop, rock and New Wave music for such hits as "Blood and Roses" and "A Girl Like You," has died at age 62. The band announced on Facebook that DiNizio died Tuesday. The cause of death was not announced. DiNizio posted several days ago that he was hopeful of getting back on tour as he continued physical therapy for neck and back injuries at the Victorian farmhouse he was restoring in Scotch Plains. The Smithereens peaked in the late 1980s-early 1990s, but continued to tour and record.

■ Live from New York: Colin Jost and Michael Che just got a promotion. "Saturday Night Live's" Weekend Update anchors Jost and Che were named co-head writers of the sketch show, NBC announced Tuesday, making Che the first person of color to ever hold the title.

■ ABC has pulled the remainder of the third season of "The Great American Baking Show" in the wake of sexual harassment allegations against judge Johnny Iuzzini. "In light of allegations that recently came to our attention, ABC has ended its relationship with Johnny Iuzzini and will not be airing the remainder of 'The Great American Baking Show' episodes," an ABC spokesman told the Daily News. The spokesman added that accusations against Iuzzini violated the company's standards of conduct, and that it would announce the winner of the season at some point in the future.

■ Essence said Thursday that Missy Elliott, a hitmaking rapper, singer, producer and songwriter, will be honored at the magazine's annual "Black Women in Music" event Jan. 25 in New York City.

■ Red Nose Day is returning to NBC in 2018. The network announced Wednesday that it will support the fundraising campaign to end child poverty with a prime-time TV special May 24.

From wire reports


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By MARKOS KOUNALAKIS  
*Special to McClatchy*

**S**tar Wars' newest episode ("The Last Jedi") is hitting screens nationwide this week, but less entertaining is this season's latest space weaponry and commercial drone deployments that increasingly threaten America's national security.

Kim Jong Un may be planning to use his nuclear and missile technology not to land an explosion on U.S. soil, but to blast it in space. Such an explosion would trigger a high-altitude electromagnetic pulse that could cripple satellites and blind any nation that relies on orbiting communications for everything from airline navigation to financial transactions.

A HEMP strike would bring about a "doomsday scenario" and an act of war that kills no one directly but plunges everyone into the first stages of a technological dark age. An October 2017 congressional hearing on this threat brought testimony that a North Korean HEMP attack could "shut down the U.S. electric power grid for an indefinite period, leading to the death within a year of 90 percent of all Americans."

Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich has been ringing this alarm bell for years, but despite HEMP hawks' fears and warnings, the current Republican-led Congress decided to shutter the 16-year-old Commission to Assess the Threat to the United States from Electromagnetic Pulse.

If the HEMP threat sounds like a worst-case and extreme act, the Pentagon thinks and prepares for such acts. It's why the military has a cyber command and does scenario planning that lays out battle plans and retaliatory strikes for a state-launched HEMP attack. The just-signed record \$700 billion military budget is also meant to build defenses against any North Korean plans to launch and land a nuke both above or on America.

Militaries need to plan for the unthinkable, but some experts believe a commonly feared HEMP attack would likely be a dud, more science fiction than serious threat. Jeffrey Lewis, a nuclear weapons expert at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies, told NPR that while an ICBM nuclear attack on the American homeland is a real threat, a HEMP attack would unlikely do more than flicker a few street lights.

New battle strategies, missiles, and drone technologies are in place to spy everything from America's electrical grid to spy on critical infrastructure. North Korea's nuclear-tipped ICBMs can now be pointed at American allies and territory, while China's best-selling consumer drones are flying off the shelf and swooping around the country, suspected to be stealthily sending their flight patterns and photos of critical infrastructure to a foreign adversary.

As the holidays approach, some of these drones will be bought, assembled and deployed by U.S. hobbyists innocently flying their new toys, potentially capturing sensitive data for foreign nations. Darth Vader's light saber is child's play compared to today's spy and fry tech.

Elsewhere in the world, low-tech snapshots are still illegal. Foreign travel lands Americans at airports, train stations, near military bases and power plants where photography remains strictly forbidden. Arrests are still made in some countries where taking photos near sensitive areas can land sightseers in jail. In an irony-free UAE, an American was arrested for taking a picture of a "No Photography" sign.

Cyberpace, however, has no borders or police, so foreign-manufactured drones flying freely in American airspace constantly gather and upload images stamped with both time and space data. Foreign-coded computer software and foreign-made hardware supplement the information gathering by collecting America's personal and

private digitized insights.

Together, they are processed into big data crunching, artificial intelligence machines spitting out real-time physical and psychological mapping of the world, from street-level views of cities to what's coming underground through the veins of America's fiber optic cables. Topographic geography, habitual behavior, predictable movement, traffic patterns, financial transactions, commuter density. It's all there. A skilled marketer and internet behemoth can use the information to manage and manipulate consumer behavior. A determined adversary can easily target and weaponize that same data.

Preventing the collection and exploitation of that valuable info should be a national priority, even if foreign hacks and popular indifference have allowed foreign countries to tap into Americans' private data and state secrets. U.S. agencies have taken some action, banning the use of Russia's Kaspresso Lab anti-virus software and grounding Chinese-made DJI drones for some official use, even though Kaspresso and DJI deny they engage in spying.

At a time when President Donald Trump tweets that America's own law enforcement and intelligence agencies are "in Tatters - worst in History!", America's adversaries are stocking their information gathering equipment on American Christmas store shelves and seeking intelligence advantages in a data giveaway underwritten and executed by holiday shoppers, municipalities and the federal government.

"The Last Jedi" is an expansively dramatic battle between good and evil. In the real world, however, the stage and theater of war being prepared is not the local cinema or a galaxy far, far away. It is the land, sea, sky and cyberspace that envelop America. May the force be with her.

Markos Kounalakis is a senior fellow at Central European University and visiting fellow at the Hoover Institution.

# Star Wars, drone spies threaten US

By DOYLE McMANUS  
*Los Angeles Times*

**A** pattern is emerging in President Donald Trump's foreign policy: Time after time, he's doing what he promised to do.

Last week, Trump announced that the United States is formally recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving its embassy there, even though some of his aides warned that the move could derail peace negotiations.

"I fulfilled my campaign promise," the president boasted on Twitter. "Others didn't."

Before that, Trump refused to certify that Iran is complying with its nuclear deal and renewed his threat to scrap the agreement, despite protests from Britain, France and Germany. Before that, he pulled the U.S. out of the Paris climate agreement, despite Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's recommendation to stay in.

And last weekend, at a campaign-style rally in Florida, Trump renewed his complaint that NATO members aren't paying their fair share for defense. He questioned whether the United States should defend them in a war with Russia.

"It helps them a hell of a lot more than it helps us, OK?" he said. "So we'll have a nation that doesn't pay. Then their nation gets frisky with whoever — Russia. So ... we end up in World War III for somebody that doesn't even pay."

In Washington, Trump's aides have tried to polish his rough edges. They have implored him to stick to official texts when

he talks about foreign policy. They have assured allies that his positions aren't as disruptive as they sound. Their message often boils down to: Watch what we do, not what he says.

From time to time, they've even succeeded in restraining the president from acting on his initial impulses.

Trump wanted to scrap the Iran deal immediately; instead, he's agreed to give Congress a chance to impose new sanctions first. (Congress has not complied.) They persuaded him, after several tries, to reaffirm the U.S. defense commitment to NATO — even though he keeps backsliding. They persuaded him to give sanctions a chance to nudge North Korea toward halting its nuclear weapons program, even though he says diplomacy is a waste of time. They convinced him to sign a bill imposing sanctions on Russia for interfering in the 2016 election — even though he still refuses to admit it happened.

But once the president is freed from the constraints of the White House, the old Trump returns: combative, blustery and resentful of the idea that the U.S. has a special obligation to lead the world.

"My job is not to be president of the world," he said in Florida. "My job is to be president of the United States of America."

It's that impulse that worries the foreign policy establishment most. They believe Trump is eroding the alliances the U.S. built after World War II, with a corresponding erosion of American influence.

"I'm scared," Madeleine Albright, who served as secretary of state under Presi-

dent Bill Clinton, said at an Aspen Strategy Group conference this week. "I often called the United States the indispensable nation. We are becoming the dispensable nation. Others are deciding they can do without us."

"There is a risk," said Stephen Hadley, a Republican who served as national security adviser under George W. Bush. "The risk is that China, Russia and others will form an alternative international order based on international principles."

That's not the only reason the president's stubborn fidelity to his campaign promises is chilling. If Trump sticks to the unloyed positions he brought to the White House, we're in for a series of crises: a military showdown with North Korea, if Kim Jong Un continues his nuclear missile program; a break with allies over Iran, if Trump acts on his promise to scrap the nuclear deal; a series of trade wars, beginning with Canada and Mexico if they continue to resist new concessions in NAFTA.

Trump can claim some successes in his first year. The war against Islamic State is coming to a close (although there's plenty of postwar work to do). He's pushed NATO countries to increase their defense spending (just not enough to make him happy). He's on a first-name basis with Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and Angela Merkel.

But at the age of 71, he hasn't changed much — and, judging from his speech in Florida, he hasn't learned much, either.

When he ran for president, he promised, in effect, to destabilize the international order. And he's delivering.

Doyle McManus is a Los Angeles Times columnist.

# OPINION

## What newspapers are saying at home

The following editorial excerpts are selected from a cross section of newspapers throughout the United States. The editorials are provided by The Associated Press and other state-side syndicates.

### Alabamians embrace new era [AL.com](#)

Half a century after Alabamians of immense courage changed the course of history in the streets of Birmingham and Selma and Montgomery, the voice of justice once again rings out from the deep south — from the ballots of black Alabamians, of women, and of young people of all genders committed to moving our world forward.

Today, there is a movement that's alive — a burning movement fueled by those who seek an America that says no more to sexual abuse of girls and women, of denial of the fundamental human rights of gay Americans, Muslims and immigrants, and of the continued systemic racism that plagues our nation.

While so many watchers from outside our borders scorned and jeered us through these last few months, Alabamians showed Tuesday what we are made of, and what we still crave.

Indeed, there is a hunger for compassion and decency, and respect, and intelligence in American politics and in American culture that can no longer be suppressed.

Doug Jones' election is a moment of change, not only in Alabama, but for an America yearning for signs that these values matter in 2017.

Jones' voter base represents the future of Alabama: an emerging coalition of black voters, LGBT activists, women and young voters. He won by offering these groups a vision that can help our state assert itself in the 21st century. We believe that he will be a strong ally for Sen. Richard Shelby and state officials in attracting economic opportunities to Alabama. And we will hold him to his word that he will be a voice of compromise in an increasingly partisan Senate.

We hope that other Alabama's politicians will heed Jones' example. The last two years have seen far too many political scandals in our state. And as we saw from Roy Moore's few campaign appearances, the Alabama Republican Party may be taking its voters for granted. We would all benefit from a better exchange of ideas, from politicians who court the broad center of the electorate rather than build a base that divides Alabama's people. Jones offered a new path for Alabama's leaders, Republican and Democrat. They should all walk it.

### Emulate proactive Fort Bragg *The Fayetteville (N.C.) Observer*

There is no question that at the highest levels of command, the American military is determined to stop the troubling level of sexual assault within the ranks. Nor is there any question that it's going to be a long, slow process. Simply telling the troops that sexual harassment and assault aren't acceptable isn't enough.

That's exactly the commitment Lt. Gen. Stephen J. Townsend, commander of Fort Bragg, N.C., and the 18th Airborne Corps, has made. "Let me say that sexual harassment and sexual assault are abhorrent to me and completely unacceptable to our Army," Townsend says. "This behavior equates to soldier-on-soldier fratricide that negatively impacts our readiness, and we won't rest until we completely change our Army's culture."

Townsend and other top Army leaders have done a lot more than declare assault unacceptable. They have launched dozens of prevention programs, including



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

**Maricruz Abarca, of Baltimore, a Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals recipient from Mexico, cries during a prayer with other DACA supporters at the Capitol on Tuesday.**

a Fort Bragg sexual assault review board that meets monthly, extensive training at every level, adding more trained counselors, making it easier to report sexual assaults and ensuring that victims are treated better and more respectfully. Fort Bragg troops have also participated in several pilot programs, including a \$3 million study that will result in a program aimed at the intersection of sexual assault and high-risk alcohol abuse.

And yet, the problem is hard to overcome. There were 156 sexual assaults reported at Fort Bragg last year, although post leaders say some of them were a result of assaults that occurred earlier. The numbers also include verified and unsubstantiated reports and some are also civilian reports against military members.

But despite the fuzziness of those numbers, we're more concerned about two other troubling aspects of sexual assault within the military. First, most sexual assaults still aren't being reported. Based on confidential surveys, the Pentagon estimates that only 32 percent of servicemen who experienced a sexual assault reported it. That's a sharp improvement in the reporting rate from just four years ago, when it was only 15 percent. Continuing efforts against sexual harassment and violence are beginning to show some small successes, even though there's a long, long way to go.

And there's another thing that's even more worrisome: Of those who did report a sexual assault, 71 percent of women and 64 percent of men said they experienced retaliation. Those numbers mean it's almost a sure thing that if you're in the military and you report you're assaulted, you'll pay for it, whether or not you have the satisfaction of seeing your attacker face consequences for the crime. No wonder the military is having such a struggle to get assault victims to report the crime.

Lory Manning, a retired Navy captain and director of government relations at the Service Women's Action Network, says those data are "an indication of the continued failure of the military services in their critical task of preventing sexual assault to begin with." That's also why Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand, of New York — ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Personnel Subcommittee — has reintroduced her bill to reform the way the military handles sexual assault cases. Her measure would take away unit commanders' authority over sexual assault cases and allow military prosecutors to decide which cases go to trial.

It's likely that more aggressive prosecution and freeing prosecutors to determine which cases go to trial would be effective steps in reducing the overall sexual assault rates in the military services, but that won't

lack of morality, ethics and simple humanity has been underscored during his 11 months in office.

The nation doesn't seek nor expect perfect presidents, and some have certainly been deeply flawed. But a president who shows such disrespect for the truth, for ethics, for the basic duties of the job and for decency toward others fails at the very essence of what has always made America great.

### Follow through on DACA fix *The Washington Post*

Quick, name a major public policy issue on which overwhelming numbers of Americans are united. Stumped? (Granted, it's a short list.) Here's one answer: allowing "dreamers" — young undocumented immigrants brought to this country as children — to remain in the United States if they pass background checks, go to school and fulfill other basic requirements. In a dozen polls this fall, including one released Tuesday, respondents who favor permitting dreamers to stay in the United States generally outnumber those who would deport them by at least 3-to-1, and often by 4-to-1 or 5-to-1.

The support for dreamers is bipartisan, and it shows up clearly and almost identically in surveys conducted by Fox News and CNN, among other media outlets, including The Washington Post. Despite that, an array of bills that would protect dreamers from deportation, either by granting them a form of legal status or by putting them on short- or long-term pathways to citizenship, remain stalled in Congress.

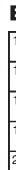
The legislative inertia is all the more stupefying given that a clear majority of lawmakers in both chambers on Capitol Hill would vote today to grant dreamers legal status or a route to citizenship. Last week, 34 Republicans in the House of Representatives wrote to Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., endorsing a "permanent legislative solution" for the nearly 700,000 immigrants whose protection from deportation, granted by the Obama administration under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, will lapse starting in March owing to a decision by President Donald Trump. That's more than enough GOP votes to ensure passage of a House bill to address the problem, given overwhelming Democratic support for such a move.

So far, though, Ryan seems to prefer a strategy of delay, dither and inaction. He says he wants Congress to address the issue next year, free from the entanglements of other pressing year-end legislative business, including a spending package whose defeat would mean a government shutdown. But to many in Congress, his prescription sounds like a recipe for inaction — and, potentially, the deportation of thousands of dreamers as their DACA permits expire. In the Senate, that has led some Democrats to consider demanding a DACA fix as the price for their support on the spending bill — and avoiding a shutdown.

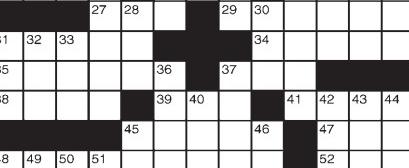
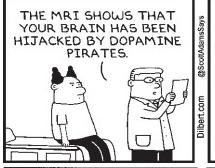
Why should it come to that? In the House, a bill introduced by Rep. Carlos Curbelo, R-Fla., and with 34 Republican co-sponsors would set dreamers on a 10-year pathway to citizenship. In the Senate, a measure with three Republican backers would set a 15-year timetable. Why not take a vote — now?

One answer is Trump, whose ever-shifting stance on extending protections for the dreamers has had a self-neutering effect. The dreamers, it seems, should in fact be very worried by what is happening in Washington. Under the deadline set by Trump, nearly 1,000 dreamers will lose their protection from deportation each day beginning March 5. At that point, a cohort of youngsters raised in this country will stop being bargaining chips; they will be come part of an unfolding American tragedy. Congress should act now to forestall that completely avoidable, and inexcusable, outcome.

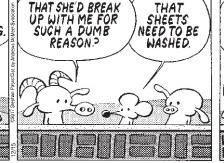
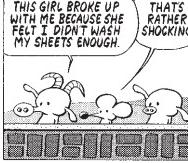
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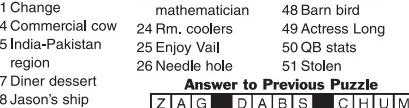
Pearls Before Swine



Non Sequitur



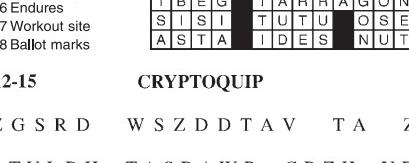
Candorville



Carpe Diem



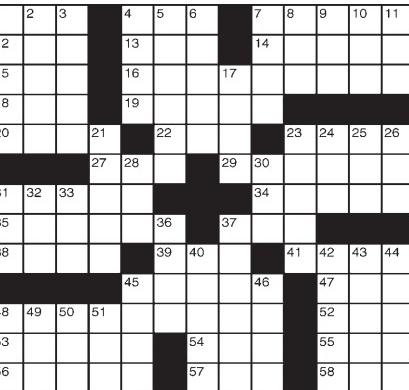
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



## Eugene Sheffer Crossword



### ACROSS

- Resort
- Pot-bellied pet
- Uses an eggbeater
- Wee bit
- Inseparable
- Mortal
- Half of bi-
- Alert
- Service charge
- City, with "The"
- Err
- Male cat
- Lighten
- Packed away
- Intrepid
- Change
- Commercial cow
- India-Pakistan region
- Diner dessert
- Jason's ship
- "Simpsons" storefront
- Fixes illegally
- Engine hums
- Gun lobby org.
- Giving places
- Rail
- Black — spider
- PBS funder
- Egg (Pref.)
- Endures
- Workout site
- Ballot marks

### DOWN

- Cram
- Talk-show group
- Farewell
- Milne bruin
- Congenital
- Very beginning
- Roller coaster cry
- Center
- "— Little Teapot"
- Crony
- NBC sketch show
- Camel feature
- Bluegrass instrument
- Swiss mathematician
- Rm. coolers
- Enjoy Vail
- Needle hole
- Airport screening org.
- Floral garland
- IRS employee
- Owned by us
- Gerund ending
- "The Wizard of Oz" author
- Provide provisions
- Tine
- Office mail holder
- Brasil place
- Ganges garments
- Church seating
- Fashion line?
- Barn bird
- Actress Long
- QB stats
- Stolen

### Answer to Previous Puzzle

Z	A	G	D	A	B	S	C	H	U	M
I	D	O	A	R	E	A	H	E	R	O
G	O	N	E	G	I	R	I	R	A	N
O	N	E	G	I	R	A	N	D	T	E
S	C	O	N	E	S	D	A	N	G	L
A	O	L	R	A	M	H	O	H	U	M
S	H	A	G	C	I	A	N	E	R	O
H	O	S	E	S	A	R	P	G	A	O
O	R	G	K	I	T	T	E	N	T	E
V	I	T	R	I	O	R	E	A	R	E
I	B	E	G	T	A	R	R	A	G	O
S	I	S	I	T	U	T	U	O	S	E
A	S	T	A	I	D	E	S	N	U	T

### 12-15

Z G S R D    W S Z D D T A V    T A    Z

L T V L B H    T A S R A W R    C B Z H    Y D

G T B N ,    Z A    Z O S Y D    O Y P B U    G R R B

C Y W S - U D Z N Z S T O    W S D R W W .

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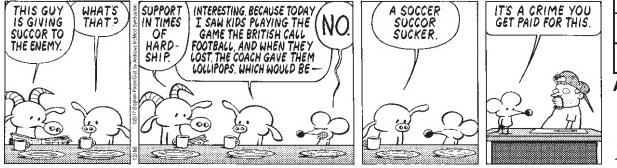
Frazz



Dilbert



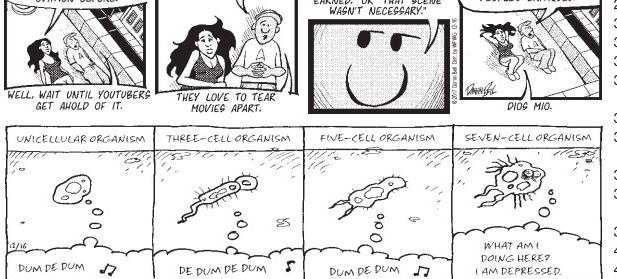
Pearls Before Swine



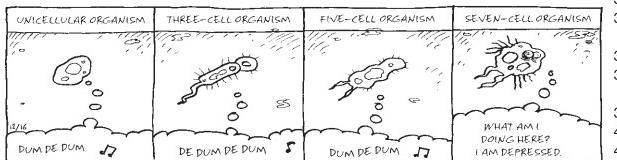
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



## Eugene Sheffer Crossword

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12			13			14			15	
16			17			18			19	
			20			21			22	
23	24	25		26		27	28	29		
30			31			32				
33			34			35				
			36			37				
38	39	40		41		42	43	44		
45			46			47				
48			49			50				
51			52			53				

## ACROSS

- 1 Hearty quaff  
4 Austen heroine  
8 Actress Ward  
12 Clear the tables  
13 Sir's counterpart  
14 Bard's river  
15 Constitution letters  
16 Whine  
17 Egg container  
18 1964 Shel Silverstein book  
21 Raw mineral  
22 — tizzy  
23 Tea variety  
26 A/C stat  
27 Golfer Ernie  
30 Coin toss  
31 Nonclerical  
32 Clench  
33 Massachusetts cape  
34 Lair  
35 S-shaped, as a road  
36 Half dozen  
37 "You've got mail" co.  
38 Buying binge  
45 Greet silently  
46 Quitter's word  
47 Assoc.  
48 Downwind  
49 Scott Turow book  
50 By way of

## DOWN

- 51 Flex  
52 Prying  
53 Finale  
54 Border on  
55 Rife with foliage  
56 Set of words  
57 Big swig  
58 Quick swim  
59 High-priced  
60 Velocity  
61 Hotel spa, say  
62 Blitzen's boss  
63 Always  
64 Misplace  
65 Initial chip  
66 Gunk  
67 Bearded beast  
68 Cpl.'s subordinate  
69 "Evil Woman" band  
70 Tease  
71 Prohibit  
72 Goof up  
73 Tyler of "Jersey Girl"  
74 CIA operative  
75 Set of words  
76 Big swig  
77 Quick swim  
78 High-priced  
79 Velocity  
80 Hotel spa, say  
81 Mille of dance  
82 Clear the decks?  
83 Robust  
84 It takes the cake  
85 iPod model  
86 Peregrinate  
87 Ms. Brockovich  
88 "Zounds!"

## Answer to Previous Puzzle

S	P	I	G	W	H	I	P	S
T	A	D	O	N	E	H	U	M
U	N	I	O	N	T	H	E	B
F	E	H	A	G	U	E	L	L
U	L	B	T	O	M	E	A	S
C	O	I	N	S	E	A	L	S
P	U	N	J	A	B	P	I	E
A	R	G	O	A	P	U	R	I
P	U	R	R	S	N	R	A	
O	N	T	H	E	M	O	V	
W	I	D	W	N	E	A	O	
L	A	S	T	S	G	Y	M	X
								E

12-16

## CRYPTOQUIP

ITIEOKY RTEO RHLSY ZXT

ZTEOA KOZKVR JS ZSKYHNL

K YTTEL A, GOKUUHRX GSOU

WKI: JSYSU WXKYOSR.

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Vol. 1—No. 241

1 Fr.

in the European Theater of Operations

1 Fr.

Sunday, March 25, 1945

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**TORONTO ASTROS** — Agreed to terms with RHP Michael Pineda on a two-year contract.

**MINNESOTA TWINS** — Agreed to terms with RHP Michael Pineda on a two-year contract.

**SEATTLE MARINERS** — Acquired RHP Shawn Armstrong from Cleveland and LHP Matt Moore from Tampa Bay for international signing bonus pool allotment.

**BASKETBALL**  
**National Basketball Association** — Signed G Josh Monteiro to terms (NBA).

**ARMED FORCES TWINS** — Transferred G Michael Grizzelle to the team.

**MEMPHIS GRIZZLIES** — Assigned F Ivan Johnson to the team (NBA).

**PHOENIX SUNS** — Signed G Leah LaCana.

**FOOTBALL**  
**National Football League**

**ARIZONA CARDINALS** — Re-signed WR Cameron Marshall to the practice squad.

**CLEVELAND BROWNS** — Signed DE Eddie Lawers. Signed OL Geoff Gray (knee), WR Jerron Johnson (knee) and Matt Hattie to the practice squad.

**DETROIT LIONS** — Signed G Michael Grizzelle to the practice squad.

**GREEN BAY PACKERS** — Signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**Houston Texans** — Signed S Ibraheim Campbell to the practice squad.

**INDIANAPOLIS COLTS** — Signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**KANSAS CITY CHIEFS** — Signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**MICHAEL BROWN** — Signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**NEW ENGLAND PATRIOTS** — Signed WR Kenny Britt. Re-signed DL Ricky Jean Francois and CB Kyle Arruda. Signed WR Bernard Berrian. Placed OL Mike Cannon on injured reserve.

**DALLAS COWBOYS** — Signed S Dot Darius. Placed LB Deion Jones on injured reserve. Signed DL Joey Saint Fleur to the practice squad.

**LOS ANGELES RAMS** — Signed DE Isaiah Johnson from the practice squad. Signed CB Marcus Sayles to the practice squad.

**NEW YORK JETS** — Signed DE Mike Daniels from the practice squad.

**NEW YORK GIANTS** — Re-signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**PITTSBURGH STEELERS** — Re-signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**ST. LOUIS BLUES** — Re-signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**WICHITA GOLDEN KNIGHTS** — Claimed F Ryan Carpenter off waivers. Assigned F Stefan Matteau to the team (AHL).

**NASHVILLE PREDATORS** — Re-signed F Frederick Gaudreau to Milwaukee (AHL).

**NEW JERSEY DEVILS** — Placed F Marcus Johansson on injured reserve, retroactive to Dec. 9. Signed D Nick Lappin from Binghamton (AHL).

**CHICAGO BLACKHAWKS** — Recalled D Ville Peltonen to the team (AHL). Placed D Cody Franson on injured reserve, retroactive to Dec. 9.

**DETROIT RED WINGS** — Reassigned D Duncan Siemens to San Antonio (AHL). Announced San Antonio re-assigned G Joe Corvo to the team (ECHL).

**NASHVILLE PREDATORS** — Re-signed F Frederick Gaudreau to Milwaukee (AHL).

**NEW YORK ISLANDERS** — Placed F Marcus Johansson on injured reserve, retroactive to Dec. 9. Signed D Nick Lappin from Binghamton (AHL).

**ST. LOUIS BLUES** — Re-signed G Mike Daniels to the practice squad.

**WICHITA GOLDEN KNIGHTS** — Claimed F Ryan Carpenter off waivers. Assigned F Stefan Matteau to the team (AHL).

**PORTLAND TRAILBLAZERS** — Traded G Mike Daniels to the team (AHL).

**ATLANTA HAWKS** — Signed D Jose Hernandez from Caracas FC (Venezuela).

**PRIMA DIVISION** — As a discovery signing, LA signed G Jon Kemper to Columbus for a 2018 fourth-round draft pick.

**NEW YORK CITY FC** — Signed D Anton Tinneher.

**PORTLAND TRAILBLAZERS** — Traded G Mike Daniels to the team (AHL).

**ATLANTA HAWKS** — Signed D Jose Hernandez from Caracas FC (Venezuela).

**NORTHERN ARIZONA** — Named Mike Marquardt head coach.

**UCLA** — Named Paul Rhoads defensive line coach.

**WOFFORD** — Announced the retirement of football coach Mike Ayers.

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**SKY BLUE FC** — Signed MF Thaisa de Moraes Rosa Matheus to the team.

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## NBA

## Scoreboard

## Eastern Conference

	Atlantic Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	24	6	800	—	
Toronto	18	8	692	4	
New York	14	12	538	8	
Philadelphia	14	13	519	8%	
Brooklyn	11	15	423	11	

## Southeast Division

	Southeast Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Washington	15	13	513	—	
Miami	13	14	481	1%	
Orlando	11	16	452	4	
Charlotte	10	17	370	4%	
Atlanta	6	21	222	8%	

## Central Division

	Central Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	20	8	714	—	
Milwaukee	15	11	577	4	
Indiana	16	10	571	7	
Detroit	14	13	519	5%	
Chicago	7	20	259	12%	

## Western Conference

	Southwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	22	4	846	—	
San Antonio	19	7	652	4	
New Orleans	15	14	517	8%	
Memphis	8	20	286	15	
Dallas	9	18	268	15	

## Northwest Division

	Northwest Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	16	12	571	—	
Oklahoma City	15	13	552	1	
Portland	14	13	519	1%	
Oklahoma City	13	14	481	2%	
Utah	13	15	464	3	

## Pacific Division

	Pacific Division	W	L	Pct	GB
Golden State	22	6	786	—	
L.A. Clippers	11	18	452	10	
L.A. Lakers	10	16	385	11	
Sacramento	9	15	333	12%	
Phoenix	9	16	306	14	

## Tuesday's games

	Tuesday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	106	106	95	—	
Oklahoma City	100	100	95	—	
Boston	124	118	109	OT	
Brooklyn	103	123	98	OT	
Dallas	103	123	95	OT	
Philadelphia	118	118	95	OT	
Sacramento	99	118	95	OT	
Phoenix	92	118	95	OT	

## Wednesday's games

	Wednesday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	106	106	95	—	
Oklahoma City	100	100	95	—	
Boston	124	118	109	OT	
Portland	118	118	95	OT	
Chicago	103	123	95	OT	
Toronto	115	118	95	OT	
Houston	115	118	95	OT	

## Thursday's games

	Thursday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	108	108	95	—	
New York	103	123	95	OT	
L.A. Lakers	123	108	95	OT	
Sacramento	103	123	95	OT	
Dallas	103	123	95	OT	

## Friday's games

	Friday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
Miami	103	123	95	OT	
Portland	118	118	95	OT	
Chicago	103	123	95	OT	
Toronto	115	118	95	OT	
Houston	115	118	95	OT	

## Saturday's games

	Saturday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland	108	108	95	—	
Oklahoma City	103	123	95	OT	
Utah	108	108	95	—	
L.A. Lakers	123	108	95	OT	

## Sunday's games

	Sunday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
Miami	103	123	95	OT	
Portland	118	118	95	OT	
Chicago	103	123	95	OT	
Toronto	115	118	95	OT	
Houston	115	118	95	OT	

## Saturday's games

	Saturday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland	108	108	95	—	
Oklahoma City	103	123	95	OT	
Utah	108	108	95	—	
L.A. Lakers	123	108	95	OT	

## Sunday's games

	Sunday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
Miami	103	123	95	OT	
Portland	118	118	95	OT	
Chicago	103	123	95	OT	
Toronto	115	118	95	OT	
Houston	115	118	95	OT	

## Sunday's games

	Sunday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
Portland	108	108	95	—	
Oklahoma City	103	123	95	OT	
Utah	108	108	95	—	
L.A. Lakers	123	108	95	OT	

## Sunday's games

	Sunday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
Miami	103	123	95	OT	
Portland	118	118	95	OT	
Chicago	103	123	95	OT	
Toronto	115	118	95	OT	
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L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
Miami	103	123	95	OT	
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	Sunday's games	W	L	Pct	GB
L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
Miami	103	123	95	OT	
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L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
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L.A. Clippers	108	108	95	—	
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## Sunday's games

## OLYMPICS

# Attempting to close the gap

## In women's hockey, world still chasing US, Canada

BY TERESA M. WALKER  
Associated Press

**F**inland goalie Noora Raty believes her country is closing the gap on the United States and Canada in women's hockey.

She has some proof, too.

The Finns beat Canada 4-3 on April 1 in the preliminary round of the world championships. Raty made 35 saves as Finland earned its first victory over the Canadians in 21 games.

"It's tough when the other team has 10 times the resources we have, but we're doing our best using the resources we have, and I think we're getting there," Raty said. "We know we might lose nine out of 10 games, but we hope that one game is going to be in February. That's all we need."

Ideally, that one win will come again with a medal on the line at the Winter Games in South Korea.

"To beat them on a regular basis is against all odds," Finland coach Pasi Mustonen said. "But we really believe we can take them a certain night, and that's what we are working for."

The United States and Canada have dominated women's hockey in the 20 years since the sport was added to the Olympics.

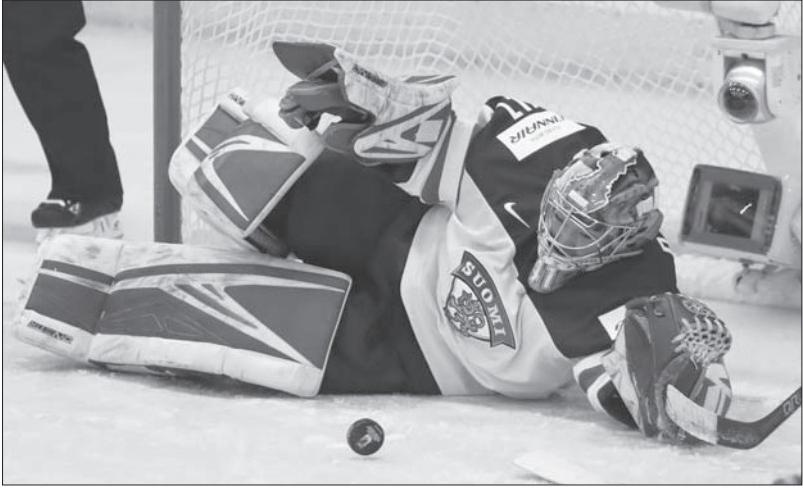
Only three other countries have medals. The Americans won the first gold in 1998, and the Canadians took the last three. Sweden broke up the North American hold with silver in 2006 and won bronze in 2002 at Salt Lake City. Switzerland earned its first medal with bronze in 2014, while Finland finished with bronze in 1998 and 2010.

Finland and Sweden both count on strong goalies. China, with Beijing hosting the 2022 Winter Games, is busy investing in the sport and might be the best bet to eventually provide a consistent medal threat.

When not playing for Finland, Raty is helping grow women's hockey in China playing with Kunlun Red Star. The far-flung team in the Canadian Women's Hockey League has a roster featuring a handful of Americans and a Canadian. Raty said she believes China has the resources both in terms of money and population to challenge the United States and Canada.

"Once China decides they want to be good at something, they're going to be good at something," Raty said. "I don't know if five years is going to be enough. But if you look at '26, '30 Olympics, if they keep doing what they're doing, they can be a powerhouse someday. It's just a matter of fact, of getting players involved. I heard our online streams, they had over 100,000 people watching our streams. That's nothing out of a billion people, but interest is starting to be there."

Demand is only a piece of the puzzle. Fi-



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

**Finnland goalie Noora Raty deflects a shot during the first period of a women's world hockey championship semifinal game against Canada on April 6, in Plymouth, Mich. The United States and Canada have won every gold medal in the Olympics.**

nancial resources and a talent pool are also key. Add both to a dedicated commitment to women's hockey, and that's why Canada and the United States do so well.

The Canadians bring together players for months before an Olympics for training, and the Americans started a residency program in Florida in September. The countries also are playing a six-game pre-

Olympic exhibition schedule, not counting two games in the Four Nations Cup in November.

"The North Americans, they have a professional team," Mustonen said. "We have people who have children, who study. We aren't even close to those possibilities, so usually what happens (in) the Olympic year is the gap widens once again because

they centralize."

Mustonen estimated Finland has about 4,000 registered hockey players compared to the pool of 55,000 in the United States and 90,000 in Canada. Half of Finland's players, like Raty, play abroad. For those still in Finland, they practice at least three times a week with boys teams to mimic playing and practicing against the North Americans.

Lief Boork started coaching the Sweden women's team in 2014 after coaching men for years. Now he's coaching players who must fit games around their work schedules because bills and money needs often come first. That also means cramming games into long weekends.

The Swedes' travel schedule to the Four Nations Cup was so compact that they arrived only hours before their first game. They lost 9-0 to Canada.

Boork noted Sweden also had players playing against Canada for the first time. The Swedish women's hockey league has about 70 foreign players, including forward Jennifer Wakefield of the Canadian national team.

"We are kind of in between," Boork said. "The girls are doing it very well, but we need more experience and more time to develop the team to top international hockey. And that's kind of a financial thing, and our federation has to make up their mind to understand the level of international women's hockey."

Canadian forward Meghan Agosta believes the North American teams have set a high bar for the sport and shown how to build a system. She noted parts of the world needed time to catch Canada and the United States in men's hockey, too.

"Now it's a lot better and the competition is totally there and you can never take a night off," Agosta said. "You want to play against the best to be the best."

The rest of the world keeps trying.



CARLOS OSORIO/AP

**Canada forward Rebecca Johnston, left, hits Finland defender Anna Kilponen during the second period. Only three countries besides the United States and Canada have taken home Olympic medals: Sweden, Finland and Switzerland.**

## NHL

## Scoreboard

## Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Tampa Bay	30	22	6	2	46	113
Toronto	32	20	11	1	41	108
Boston	30	18	12	4	39	105
Montreal	31	13	14	4	30	85
Florida	31	12	14	5	29	92
Detroit	30	12	14	3	27	90
Ottawa	30	10	13	7	25	82
Buffalo	31	8	17	6	27	82
<b>Metropolitan Division</b>						
Columbus	32	19	11	4	39	88
Washington	32	19	12	1	39	100
New Jersey	31	17	13	4	37	96
N.Y. Islanders	31	17	11	3	37	110
N.Y. Rangers	31	16	12	3	35	101
Philadelphia	31	14	14	4	35	96
Philadelphia	30	12	11	7	31	87
Carolina	30	12	11	7	31	88

## Western Conference

Central Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
St. Louis	32	21	9	2	44	104
Nashville	30	19	11	4	39	96
Winnipeg	31	18	8	5	41	107
Dallas	31	18	13	1	37	96
Minnesota	31	14	14	3	35	96
Chicago	31	11	15	5	35	93
Colorado	32	11	14	2	36	94

Pacific Division						
GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA
Los Angeles	32	20	9	3	43	98
Vegas	30	19	9	2	40	105
San Jose	32	19	12	3	40	96
Calgary	31	16	12	3	35	89
Anaheim	31	13	11	7	33	83
Edmonton	31	13	16	4	32	93
Arizona	33	13	16	2	28	93
<b>Notes:</b> Two points are awarded a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild cards per conference qualify.						

## Tuesday's games

Edmonton	1	Columbus	2
Buffalo	3	Orlando	2
Philadelphia	4	Toronto	2
Washington	5	Colorado	2
New Jersey	2	Montreal	1
Minnesota	2	Calgary	1
Tampa Bay	3	St. Louis	0
Chicago	3	Phoenix	0
Carolina	3	Vegas	2

## Wednesday's games

Dallas	1	Phoenix	2
Ottawa	3	N.Y. Rangers	2
Boston	3	Detroit	2
Houston	3	Vancouver	1

## Thursday's games

Buffalo	1	Philadelphia	1
Washington	3	N.Y. Islanders	1
New York	2	Columbus	1
Montreal	2	Montreal	1
Chicago	2	Winnipeg	1
Anaheim	3	St. Louis	0
Toronto	2	Phoenix	0
Florida	2	Colorado	0
Tampa Bay	2	Arizona	0
Nashville	2	San Jose	0
Pittsburgh	2	Calgary	0

## Friday's games

Dallas	1	Phoenix	1
Carolina	1	Buffalo	0
Los Angeles	2	N.Y. Rangers	0
Toronto	2	Atlanta	0
San Jose	1	Vancouver	0

## Saturday's games

Edmonton	1	Montreal	2
N.Y. Rangers	1	Boston	0
Buffalo	1	Colorado	0
Winnipeg	1	St. Louis	0
Montreal	1	Ottawa	0
Calgary	1	Phoenix	0
Dallas	1	Philadelphia	0
Philadelphia	1	Anaheim	0
Arizona	1	Tampa Bay	0
Toronto	1	Colorado	0
Florida	1	Phoenix	0
Tampa Bay	1	Arizona	0
Nashville	1	Calgary	0
Pittsburgh	1	Vancouver	0

## Sunday's games

St. Louis	1	Winnipeg	2
Minnesota	1	Montreal	0
Edmonton	1	Phoenix	0
Carolina	1	Philadelphia	0
Calgary	1	Tampa Bay	0
Dallas	1	Colorado	0
Philadelphia	1	Phoenix	0
Arizona	1	Tampa Bay	0
Toronto	1	Calgary	0
Florida	1	Vancouver	0
Tampa Bay	1	Phoenix	0
Nashville	1	Vancouver	0
Pittsburgh	1	Calgary	0

## Leaders

## Goal scoring

Name	Team	GP	G
Nikita Kucherov	Tampa Bay	30	21
Alex Ovechkin	Washington	32	21
Andrea在一月	Carolina	31	19
John Tavares	N.Y. Islanders	31	18
Sean Monahan	Calgary	31	17
Connor McDavid	Edmonton	30	17
Anze Kopitar	Los Angeles	31	16
Brayden Schenn	St. Louis	32	16
Logan Couture	San Jose	30	15
Sean Couturier	Philadelphia	30	15
Filip Forsberg	Nashville	30	15
Mike Smith	Phoenix	30	15
William Karlsson	Vegas	30	15
Phil Kessel	Pittsburgh	32	15
David Pastrnak	Boston	28	15
James van Riemsdyk	Toronto	31	15
Justin Bailey	St. Louis	30	14
Mark Stone	Ottawa	30	14
Tyler Toffoli	Los Angeles	32	14

## Plus/Minus

Name	Team	GP	+/-
Brayden Schenn	St. Louis	32	23
Justin Bailey	St. Louis	30	23
Anton Stralman	Tampa Bay	30	23
Vladimir Tarasenko	St. Louis	32	17
Douglas Murray	Edmonton	31	17
Radek Faksa	Dallas	31	15
Drew Doughty	Los Angeles	32	14
Brayden Schenn	St. Louis	31	14
Robert Hagg	Philadelphia	30	14
Anze Kopitar	Los Angeles	32	14
Alexander Semin	Carolina	30	13
Patrice Bergeron	Boston	23	13
Sean Couturier	Philadelphia	30	13
André Lahey	N.Y. Islanders	30	13
Austin Matthews	Toronto	26	13

# Prior's skill put to test in Vegas

Goalie coach forced to fast-track youngsters when Fleury got hurt

By W.G. RAMIREZ

Associated Press

## LAS VEGAS

**D**ave Prior has a knack for fast-tracking goalies at the NHL level.

The analytical and strategic mind that helped draft and develop 2016 Vezina Trophy winner Braden Holtby in Washington was brought to Vegas with hopes he would not only work with veteran Marc-Andre Fleury but also develop the fledgling franchise's younger netminders.

Little did Prior know his expertise would be so thoroughly put to the test during the first two months of the season.

After Fleury went down with a concussion Oct. 13 and missed the next 25 games, the expansion Golden Knights have enjoyed a historic start thanks in part to four goalies who had seen action in two combined NHL games before this season.

Malcolm Subban, Maxim Lapierre and Oscar Dansk saw most of the action, while Dylan Ferguson spent just over nine minutes between the pipes.

And though Fleury lost in his 69th career start Tuesday night against the Carolina Hurricanes in his long-anticipated return, Vegas is still in second place in the Pacific Division with 40 points, three behind the Los Angeles Kings.

"It's been a fascinating story for me as a coach because I haven't been challenged in this way before," Prior said. "I don't think I've approached it any different than I have tasks in the past. You're not usually confronted with replacing one guy after another after another. I had a lot of input into the goaltenders that

we signed here and took in the expansion draft.

"The goalies didn't let me down. I steered them in the direction, but they've done all the work."

The five goalies have a combined .905 save percentage, led by Subban, whose .924 save percentage ranks eighth among all goaltenders with a minimum 10 games played. Among goalies who have played at least four games, Dansk leads the league with a .946 save percentage and Fleury is ninth at .930.

Prior said the development of his goaltending prospects began with a philosophical approach in training camp. He knew the chemistry was far from what he wanted, but he was also pleased with what he had bought into the system and that he had earned their trust.

"When these opportunities came, it sort of was an opportunity to accelerate the process," Prior said. "You don't usually get to train guys in this environment that are in the minors. I believed they had the upside to become NHL goaltenders. I was just hoping the step they were going to be good enough to make it to No. 1 in the American (Hockey) League first, let alone be thrown into being the guy who had to play in the NHL. They worked really hard and bought in and we managed to survive the loss of Marc-Andre."

Without Fleury, the Golden Knights were 16-8-1, including a stellar 7-1-0 against Pacific Division opponents. Vegas coach Gerard Gallant said he's left the goaltenders alone, avoiding interfering with what Prior instilled during training camp.

Gallant said he's left the goaltenders alone, avoiding interfering with what Prior instilled during training camp.

Prior acknowledged Gallant's hands-off approach and said it's made it easier to work with Fleury.



JACQUELYN MARTIN/AP

The Washington Capitals' Alexander Semin, left, talks to goalie coach Dave Prior during practice on Feb. 7, 2007 in Arlington, Va. Prior was brought to Vegas with the hope he would not only work with veteran goalie Marc-Andre Fleury but also develop the fledgling franchise's younger netminders.

"I don't know how he does it. He spends a lot of time in video with these guys, more than I've seen in the past," Gallant said. "He's just focused on them doing the right things and playing the right way. ... He wants to get the best from every goaltender and he gets the best confidence every goaltender."

"Without Fleury, he may be a little more involved, but the goaltenders have done a good job."



ISAAC BREKKE/AP

Carolina Hurricanes left wing Phil Di Giuseppe reacts after scoring on Golden Knights goalie Marc-Andre Fleury during a shootout Tuesday.

# COLLEGE FOOTBALL

# Clemson returns, focused on Tide

By PETE IACOBELLI  
Associated Press

CLEMSON, S.C. — This is Clemson coach Dabo Swinney's favorite time of the year — his league champion Tigers primed for bowl practice and ready to chase a national title.

"This is fun for me," Swinney said Tuesday night.

The top-ranked Tigers (12-1, No. 1 CFP) have had most of the past 10 days off since dismantling Miami 34-3 to win their third straight Atlantic Coast Conference crown. That brought a third consecutive trip to the College Football Playoff where they'll face No. 4 Alabama (11-1) for — you guessed it — the third year in a row in the Sugar Bowl on New Year's Day.

Swinney said the players needed the break from what was a long season striving to match last year's national champions. They reconvened Sunday night for a brief workout in shorts before getting down to the serious business of prepping for the Crimson Tide.

"We've got a good plan," Swinney said.

The Tigers usually do. They are 40-3 the past three seasons, including one defeat coming to Alabama and coach Nick Saban in the 2015 title game, 45-40. Clemson faced the Tide in the final game a year ago, this time coming away with 35-31 victory with a last-second TD to shock favored Alabama.

The winner this time will leave with the Sugar Bowl trophy and a chance to play for the game's biggest prize — and certainly enhance the legacy of a growing rivalry between two of the most dominant programs of this era.

The Tigers have played with a focus down the stretch that was not always as evident earlier.

They've scored at least 31 points in their past five games, all victories. They've given up just 16 total points and one TD in the last three, two of them against potent offenses in South Carolina and the Hurricanes.

The Tigers were supposed to take a dip this season after losing 11 starters from the national champions, including All-Americans and NFL first-rounders in



Bob Leverone/AP

**Clemson head coach Dabo Swinney, left, talks with Kelly Bryant during the ACC Championship game. The Tigers are returning to practice after 10 days off.**

quarterback Deshaun Watson and receiver Mike Williams. Still, Clemson's back where it's been the past two seasons.

"These guys just think they should win," Swinney said.

Receiver Ray-Ray McCloud said the Tigers will carry that belief into Alabama. McCloud, a junior who is third on the team with 46 catches, is excited for another chance to play the Crimson Tide, but said no matter the opponent, Clemson would prepare with the same mentality that's marked their success. Alabama is "just another team in the way," he said.

The time off has given players with small injuries and those with more significant ones to heal. Swinney believes starting linebacker Ter Lamar and cornerback Mark Fields would be ready come New Year's Day.

One backup who'll miss the Alabama game is linebacker Judah Davis, who is out with a knee injury. Swinney said Davis, the son of former Clemson linebacker Jeff Davis, could return if the team reaches the title game in Atlanta.

Swinney will juggle workouts with his players taking final exams this week. They'll practice on campus through Dec. 22 when the team will get time off for the holidays. The Tigers will reconvene Dec. 26 and head to New Orleans the next day.

The Tigers (10-3, No. 7) return to Mercedes-Benz Stadium, where they lost 28-20 to No. 3 Georgia in the Southeastern Conference championship game with a playoff spot on the line. They'll also open there next season against Washington.

Auburn won the last five games of the

regular season, including double-digit victories over playoff-bound Georgia and Alabama. The Tigers didn't fare nearly so well in the rematch with the Bulldogs with injuries hitting tailback Kerryon Johnson and key defenders Carlton Davis and Tre' Williams.

"We had three emotional and physical games down the stretch that we just had to figure out a way to overcome," Malzahn said. "I will tell you this, our team will learn from that game. A chance to play another

## Saturday's bowl games



### Las Vegas Bowl

**Boise State (10-3, Mountain West)**

vs. Oregon (7-5, Pac-12)

9:30 p.m. Saturday CET;

5:30 a.m. Sunday JKT, AFN-Sports2

**Top players:** Boise State: QB Brett Rypien, 2,515 yards passing, 14 TDs; Oregon: RB Royce Freeman, 1,475 yards rushing, 16 TDs.

**Notable:** Boise State: The Broncos avenged a loss to Fresno State the week before by beating the Bulldogs 17-14 in the Mountain West title game. Oregon: The Ducks finished the season on a two-game winning streak, thrashing Arizona and rival Oregon State to reach seven victories in coach Willie Taggart's first season.

**Last time:** Boise State 19, Oregon 14, (Sept. 3, 2009).

**Bowl history:** Boise State: Sixth consecutive bowl appearance, tied for sixth-best in the nation with Wisconsin. Oregon: Twelfth bowl appearance in the last 13 years, third appearance in Las Vegas Bowl.



### Camellia Bowl

**Middle Tennessee (6-6, 4-4 C-USA)**

vs. Arkansas St. (7-4, 6-2 Sun Belt)

Montgomery, Ala.

2 a.m. Sunday CET;

10 a.m. Sunday JKT, AFN-Sports2

**Top players:** Middle Tennessee: S. Javonte Moffat leads the team with 95 tackles. Arkansas State: QB Justice Hansen has broken Ryan Aplin's school single-season passing record with 3,630 yards. He also has thrown a Sun Belt record 34 touchdowns passes.

**Notable:** Middle Tennessee: Went 3-1 after QB Brent Stockstill, the school's career passing leader, returned after missing six games, with an injury. Arkansas State: Ja'Von Rolland-Jones needs one more sack to break the career FBS record of 44 held by Terrell Suggs and Jonathan Peterson. Ended regular season with a 32-25 loss to Troy on a TD with 17 seconds left with a share of the Sun Belt title on the line.

**Last time:** Arkansas St. won 45-0 on Dec. 1, 2012.

**Bowl history:** Middle Tennessee: Bowl eligible for the sixth straight year; 3-7 all-time in bowl appearances with four straight losses. Arkansas State: Seventh consecutive bowl berth and eighth overall, going 3-4.



### New Orleans Bowl

**North Texas (9-4, 7-1 C-USA)**

vs. Troy (10-2, 7-1 Sun Belt)

7 p.m. Saturday CET;

3 a.m. Sunday JKT, AFN-Sports

**Top players:** North Texas: QB Mason Fine. He's thrown for 3,749 yards, 28 touchdowns and 13 interceptions this season. Seven different receivers have caught at least 24 passes. Troy: LB Tron Folsom. He leads the team with 77 tackles and also has nine sacks for a loss and an interception.

**Notable:** North Texas: The Mean Green set several single-season program records, including scoring, total offense, passing yards and passing touchdowns. They won eight of their last 10 games. Troy: The Trojans' biggest moment of the season was when they beat LSU 24-21 on Sept. 30.

**Last time:** Troy has won eight of 10 vs. North Texas.

**Bowl history:** North Texas is in its 10th bowl game and has 3-6 record in previous bowls. Troy is in its seventh bowl game and has a 3-3 record.



### Cube Bowl

**Georgia State (6-5, 5-3 Sun Belt)**

vs. W. Kentucky (6-6, 4-4 C-USA)

Orlando, Fla.

**Top players:** Georgia State: WR Penny Hart. The sophomore leads the Sun Belt with a school-record 73 receptions for 1,094 yards and eight touchdowns. Western Kentucky: QB Mike White. The Senior Bowl invitee leads Conference USA in total offense (300.3 yards per game).

**Notable:** Georgia State: RB Glenn Smith is one of just three active FBS players with at least 1,000 yards rushing, 1,000 receiving and 1,000 return yards in his career. Western Kentucky: The Hilltoppers are one of 11 teams in FBS with five or more receivers that have 25 or more catches.

**Last time:** Western Kentucky won 44-28 in a 2013 regular-season game.

**Bowl history:** Georgia State is making only its second bowl appearance. The Panthers lost 27-16 to San Jose State in the 2013 Cure Bowl. Western Kentucky is 4-1.



### Celebration Bowl

**Georgia (State) (6-5, 5-3 Sun Belt)**

vs. W. Kentucky (6-6, 4-4 C-USA)

Orlando, Fla.

**Top players:** Georgia State: WR Penny Hart. The sophomore leads the Sun Belt with a school-record 73 receptions for 1,094 yards and eight touchdowns. Western Kentucky: QB Mike White. The Senior Bowl invitee leads Conference USA in total offense (300.3 yards per game).

**Notable:** Georgia State: RB Glenn Smith is one of just three active FBS players with at least 1,000 yards rushing, 1,000 receiving and 1,000 return yards in his career. Western Kentucky: The Hilltoppers are one of 11 teams in FBS with five or more receivers that have 25 or more catches.

**Last time:** Western Kentucky won 44-28 in a 2013 regular-season game.

**Bowl history:** Georgia State is making only its second bowl appearance. The Panthers lost 27-16 to San Jose State in the 2013 Cure Bowl. Western Kentucky is 4-1.



### New Mexico Bowl

**Colorado St. (7-5, Mountain West)**

vs. Marshall (7-5, C-USA)

Albuquerque, N.M.

**Top players:** Colorado State: QB Nick Stevens, 3,479 yards passing, 27 TDs. Marshall: QB Chase Litton, 2,853 yards passing, 23 TDs.

**Notable:** Colorado State: Beat San Jose State 42-14 in regular-season finale, snapping a three-game losing streak. Marshall: The Thundering Herd dropped four of their last five games after a 6-1 start.

**Last time:** First meeting.

**Bowl history:** Colorado State: Fifth straight bowl appearance. The Rams are 1-3 in the previous games. Marshall: The Herd last played in a bowl in 2015, beating UConn 16-10 in St. Petersburg, Fla.

— Associated Press

# Malzahn, No. 7 Auburn set for Peach Bowl preparations

Associated Press

AUBURN, Ala. — Flush with a new long-term deal, Auburn coach Gus Malzahn likes where his program stands long-term and where the Tigers are headed in the near future.

Malzahn's seventh-ranked Tigers are set to begin preparation Friday for the Peach Bowl against No. 10 UCF (12-0, No. 12 College Football Playoffs) in their second straight New Year's Day bowl game.

He got a seven-year deal after being courted by Arkansas, his home state team, and defensive coordinator Kevin Steele is also expected to stay put after interviewing for the head coaching job at Tennessee.

The Tigers (10-3, No. 7) return to Mercedes-Benz Stadium, where they lost 28-20 to No. 3 Georgia in the Southeastern Conference championship game with a playoff spot on the line. They'll also open there next season against Washington.

Auburn won the last five games of the

regular season, including double-digit victories over playoff-bound Georgia and Alabama. The Tigers didn't fare nearly so well in the rematch with the Bulldogs with injuries hitting tailback Kerryon Johnson and key defenders Carlton Davis and Tre' Williams.

"We had three emotional and physical games down the stretch that we just had to figure out a way to overcome," Malzahn said. "I will tell you this, our team will learn from that game. A chance to play another

game in the same arena I think is big. Our team will be extremely hungry and that's exciting to me."

The Tigers will be once again without tailback Kamryn Pettway, who remains out with a fractured shoulder blade. He said he'll know more about the status of Johnson's injured right shoulder and other players recovering from injuries once bowl practice starts. He said Johnson didn't require surgery.

NFL

# Struggles in red zone have cost Chiefs

By DAVE SKRETTA  
Associated Press

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — The Kansas City Chiefs thought they had a touchdown when Travis Kelce hauled in a 10-yard pass from Alex Smith early in the second quarter of last Sunday's victory over Oakland.

They wound up with a field goal.

The touchdown was wiped out when right tackle Mitchell Schwartz had wandered too far downfield, and a pair of incomplete passes bookending a sack by Khalil Mack nixed the drive.

The Chiefs had to call upon Harrison Butker for a 33-yard field goal for a 16-0 lead — the latest prime example of their futility when it comes to executing in the red zone.

Butker wound up kicking four field goals in the 26-15 victory over the Raiders, the fourth time in 10 games the rookie has attempted at least that many. Twice he's gone 5-for-5 in a game.

"We would have loved to not have kicked so many field goals," Chiefs quarterback Alex Smith said. "We've been moving the ball really well ... I had lots of drives that for whatever reason — the missed opportunities and negative plays in the red zone. We had chances I think to make plays and didn't."

That's been a trend for the Chiefs the past couple of years.

They're only converting 44.4 percent of their trips inside the 20-yard line into touchdowns this season, a modest decrease over the 47.37 percent of last season. That ranks 28th in the league, and is a far cry from the 67.39 percent of touchdowns that the Philadelphia Eagles have scored.

Oh, those Eagles are coached by former Chiefs offensive coordinator Doug Pederson. That adds a bit of insult to injury.

Smith has been asked about the Chiefs' red zone woes before, and



**Los Angeles Chargers (7-6)**  
at **Kansas City Chiefs (7-6)**

AFN-Sports  
2:25 a.m. Sunday CET  
10:25 a.m. Sunday JKT

he points out the inherent trouble in scoring close to the goal line.

The field gets compressed and a team that prefers to spread the field has a harder time accomplishing the goal, making it harder to get the ball across the goal line.

That issue is compounded by the Chiefs' personnel. They have undersized speedsters such as Tyreke Hill and Albert Wilson at wide receiver, but none of the big, lanky wide receivers that would allow Smith to chuck the ball in the corner of the end zone in a one-on-one matchup with a cornerback.

## By the numbers

**13**

The number of FG attempts between 30-39 yards by Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker, which is tied for the most in the NFL.

**6**

The number of games Butker has attempted at least three FGs. In those games, he has missed just one attempt.

**44**

Percentage of Chiefs' drives into the red zone in which they have scored a TD, which ranks 28th in the league.

SOURCE: AP, NFL.com

Their biggest threat in the red zone is Kelce, their All-Pro tight end, and rarely does he drop a pass or come up short of the end zone. But he did both last Sunday, the drop leading to a field goal.

"There were two drives where we ended up with field goals where I could have gotten in the end zone and helped out the team," said Kelce, his own biggest critic. "That's the kind of accountability I put on myself to do better. And I will."

It's not just Kelce, though. It's an offense-wide issue, one that has cost them dearly.

The Chiefs were 3-for-3 in the red zone in their season-opening rout of New England, and they were 2-for-3 in a win the following week against the Eagles. All told, they are 13-for-24 scoring touchdowns in the red zone in their seven wins, good for 54 percent — solidly middle of the pack.

In their six losses? The Chiefs are 3-for-12 in the red zone.

Chiefs coach Andy Reid opts to take a positive spin on the struggles. He correctly points out that his young kicker is doing "phenomenal," ensuring they get at least something out of



CHARLIE RIEDEL/AP

**Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker kicks a 53-yard field goal against the Oakland Raiders last week. Butker had never kicked 28 field goals in a season. He has that many for the Chiefs, even though he hasn't spent the entire season with them. Good for him. Not so good for a team that keeps struggling to score touchdowns.**

those drives. And even when the Chiefs have come up empty, they have kept their heads down and worked.

"We've got an All-Pro tight end who doesn't drop very many balls and he had a drop. Nobody hung their head, he didn't hang his head," Reid said after the Raiders game.

"He got back in and had another big catch. We left some points on the field. Nobody flinched with

it, they just kept going."

Still, the Chiefs know they can't keep leaving points on the board, especially with the streaking Los Angeles Chargers coming to town Saturday night for a matchup of AFC West leaders.

"Offensively, I think we're feeling really good where we're at right now," Smith said. "Obviously the ramifications will be big, no question. The stakes will be high."

# Late drives allow Lions to keep playoff hopes alive

By LARRY LAGE  
Associated Press



Detroit's Quandre Diggs, right, celebrates with cornerback Darius Slay Jr. after an interception on Sunday.

JASON BEHNKEN/AP

ALLEN PARK, Mich. — The Detroit Lions have hopes of making the playoffs for at least another week.

Perhaps fittingly, they did it by making enough plays late in a game to win.

Detroit ended its second losing streak of two or more games this season, going 49 yards to set up Matt Prater's 46-yard field goal to beat Tampa Bay 24-21 last Sunday.

In Jim Caldwell's four seasons, the Lions lead the league with 20 wins on drives in the fourth quarter or overtime.

"The biggest thing is they are not daunted by some huge task and adversity," Caldwell said Monday. "They use it as a friend than a foe."



**Chicago Bears (4-9)**

at **Detroit Lions (7-6)**

AFN-Sports  
10:30 p.m. Saturday CET  
6:30 a.m. Sunday JKT

Detroit (7-6) faces Chicago (4-9) at home Saturday, aiming to close the regular season strong enough to stay in postseason contention.

The Lions will have to win their next three games and get some — or a lot — of help to reach the playoffs for the second straight time and third overall under

Caldwell.

Carolina (9-4), New Orleans (9-4) and Atlanta (8-5) are all ahead of them in the NFC, and they all beat Detroit to own potential tiebreakers.

Detroit's best chance to beat the Bears, win at Cincinnati and defeat Green Bay at home is to protect quarterback Matthew Stafford as well as it did against the Buccaneers.

Stafford was not sacked for the first time in a game this season. He was sacked 13 times the previous four games and stepped on once, leading to him throwing with a banged-up hand.

"Matthew's been incredible in that sense," Caldwell said. "Tough. Hard-nosed. Quick healer. And when he doesn't heal exactly like you'd want to and feel great, he finds a way to play through them and play well through them. So,

that's an unusual trait."

Stafford usually doesn't have much of a running game, forcing him to throw a lot and lately he has been very accurate in the one-dimensional offense that relies on his right arm.

He is the first NFL player to complete at least 80 percent of his passes in consecutive road games with at least 29 attempts. Against Tampa Bay, he was 36-for-44 and his 8.1 percent completion rate tied for the third-best by an NFL player with at least 44 passes in a game.

"Our guys on the training staff did an unbelievable job helping me out getting this feeling as good as I possibly could," Stafford said. "Our guys did a great job of keeping me upright and they allowed me to sit in there and throw the ball around and make the game feel pretty good."

NFL

# Foles not your ordinary backup

## Former Eagles starter is uniquely suited to replace injured QB Wentz

By ROB MAADDI  
Associated Press

**PHILADELPHIA** — Nick Foles is stepping into a pressure situation with a team that has enormous expectations in a city desperate for its first Super Bowl title.

He's no ordinary backup quarterback.

Foles had tremendous success as a starter for the Philadelphia Eagles in 2013 and he experienced failure as the No. 1 quarterback for the St. Louis Rams in 2015. He's won an offensive MVP award at a Pro Bowl, been traded, released and contemplated retirement.

Now he's the man leading the NFC East champions.

Foles is no Carson Wentz, who was having an MVP-caliber season before he tore his left ACL. But, he's a capable quarterback who won't be overwhelmed by the spotlight.

"He's matured as a quarterback, his leadership ability, his understanding of our offense, of defenses," Eagles coach Doug Pederson said Wednesday. "We always knew he was a smart, intelligent quarterback."

Pederson was here was an assistant when former coach Andy Reid selected Foles in the third round of the 2012 draft. Foles started six games that season for a 4-2 team.

**FROM BACK PAGE**

Martavis Bryant missed both games last season while serving a yearlong suspension. Ben Roethlisberger sat out a 27-16 regular-season home loss to the Patriots last fall while recovering from a knee injury.

Neither Bell nor Bryant played in the 2015 season opener in New England after running afoul of league policy.

This time around Pittsburgh has no health issues, no discipline issues and no excuses. The unit that spent a large portion of September and October searching for a rhythm it has found over the past month.

The Steelers are averaging 33.25 points over their past four games, including 39 last Sunday night against Baltimore that clinched Pittsburgh's third division title in four years and seemed to answer any lingering questions about Roethlisberger's commitment level.

The 35-year-old who looked every bit his age while throwing five picks in a loss to Jacksonville that no longer looks as surprising as it did at the time became the first player in NFL history to throw for 500 yards three times when he lit up the NFL's third-ranked pass defense for 506 and two touchdowns.

Roethlisberger just laughed Wednesday when asked if he needed to ice his right

began 2013 as the backup to Michael Vick in Chip Kelly's first season in Philly. Foles replaced Vick after he was injured in October, had a sensational season and led the Eagles to their most recent playoff appearance — a home loss to New Orleans.

Foles threw 27 TDs and only two picks in 10 starts and posted a passer rating of 119.2, third-highest in league history. He tied an NFL record with seven TD passes in a game at Oakland in November 2013.

Foles wasn't quite as spectacular in 2014, but the Eagles were 6-2 in his eight starts. He tossed 13 TDs, 10 interceptions and missed the final eight games after breaking his collarbone.

Kelly traded him to St. Louis for Sam Bradford in March 2015 and Foles went 4-7 on a 7-9 team. He was released by the Rams and re-united with Reid in Kansas City as Alex Smith's backup. Foles filled in nicely when Smith was injured last season and led the Chiefs to a victory in his only start.

He returned to Philadelphia to back up Wentz on an \$11 million, two-year contract.

"I think with experience and age, you gain knowledge and wisdom," Foles said.

"Obviously life changes and you just sort of see the game a little more clearly. Even stepping



KELVIN KUO/AP

**Philadelphia quarterback Nick Foles looks to pass against the Rams during the second half of Sunday's game in Los Angeles. Foles rallied the Eagles to a 43-35 win against the Rams by guiding the offense to field goals on consecutive drives after starter Carson Wentz went down with a knee injury.**

into the game like the other night, you're in the fourth quarter, you're on the road, it's a big game."

"And you really just go back to your training, you go back to your experiences in life. You know how to sort of live in that moment to execute the plays to help your team win."

Foles rallied the Eagles to a 43-35 win against the Los Angeles Rams by guiding the offense to field goals on consecutive drives after Wentz went down.

He'll get his first start at the New York Giants (2-11) on Sun-

day against an aggressive defense led by interim coach Steve Spagnuolo.

The Eagles can secure a first-round bye with a win. They'll look up the NFC's No. 1 seed with two wins in their final three games or one win and one loss by the Vikings (10-3).

"It starts with that chemistry," Foles said. "The teams that I have been on that have been really good have had that, and this is one of them."

While Foles doesn't possess Wentz's scrambling ability and

elusiveness, the Eagles don't plan to change their offense. But coaches wouldn't say otherwise. It would make sense to rely more on a strong running game led by Jay Ajayi, LeGarrette Blount and Corey Clement.

"Certainly it starts at quarterback, but it's really built around all the talent that we have on offense," offensive coordinator Frank Reich said. "So we're full steam ahead."

Wentz had surgery to repair his ACL on Wednesday. Players typically need between nine and 12 months to return to the field.

victory. And while Antonio Brown put up his weekly eye-popping numbers (11 receptions for 213 yards), tight end Jesse James caught a career-high 10 passes.

Even fullback Rosie Nix got in on it, pulling down the first touchdown of his career in the fourth quarter when he made a grab in the end zone over Baltimore safety Tony Jefferson.

"It was like, 'Everybody is eating, where's my plate?'" Smith-Schuster said. "Ben is on fire right now."

He may have to be if the Steelers want to lock down home-field advantage in the AFC playoffs. Roethlisberger showed his frustration with a lack of playmakers after losing the championship game.

The Steelers responded by making Brown the highest-paid wide receiver in the league, drafting Smith-Schuster in the second round of the draft and welcoming the talented if mercurial Bryant back into the fold.

Patriots coach Bill Belichick has built a Hall of Fame career by finding one option on the other team and doing what it takes to neutralize him.

Even he's aware that Pittsburgh has as many options as any team in the league. He called Bell, the league's leading rusher, "almost impossible to stop."



DON WRIGHT/AP

**Pittsburgh running back Le'Veon Bell, center is sandwiched by Ravens linebackers C.J. Mosley, right, and Matt Judon. The Steelers are averaging 33.25 points over the last four games, including 39 on Sunday against Baltimore.**

## Offense: Back at full strength, Steelers eager to face Patriots

## NFL

# Ravens pledge not to take Browns lightly

By DAVID GINSBURG  
Associated Press

OWINGS MILLS, Md. — As a member of the Alabama football team, Marlon Humphrey knew what to expect against non-league foes such as Mercer and Kent State.

"We played a lot of teams that we definitely should easily run over," Humphrey recalled.

Now a rookie starting cornerback with the Baltimore Ravens, Humphrey finds himself in a seemingly similar situation entering Sunday's game against the winless Cleveland Browns.

The Ravens (7-6) are chasing a playoff berth. The Browns (0-13) are trying to avoid becoming the second 0-16 team in NFL history. In addition, Baltimore is 17-2 against Cleveland under coach John Harbaugh, having won four straight and six of seven in the lopsided series.

To Humphrey, this must seem like Alabama-Chattanooga all over again.

Guess again.

"The difference between then and now is that any team can beat you in the NFL. That's one of the things I learned pretty quickly," Humphrey said Wednesday. "You go into a game and think, 'We should beat this team,' and then you end up coming up short. There's never a guaranteed win."

**'There's never a guaranteed win in the NFL. You treat every team the same no matter what their record is.'**

Marlon Humphrey  
Ravens rookie cornerback, on playing the winless Cleveland Browns

in the NFL. You treat every team the same, no matter what their record is."

It is a lesson the Ravens learned in 2007 under coach Brian Billick. Facing the 0-13 Miami Dolphins on the road, Baltimore came out flat and lost 22-16 in overtime. The defeat probably cost Billick his job. He was fired after that 5-11 season despite guiding Baltimore to a Super Bowl win in 2000.

Ravens linebacker Terrell Suggs was a member of that Ravens team. He vividly remembers the loss, most notably the game-winning TD pass yielded by safety Ed Reed.

"Ed Reed, nine out of 10 times he's right," Suggs said. "He was just wrong on that one."

Suggs hasn't shared his recollection of that embarrassing loss with his current teammates — yet.

"I didn't bring it up, but maybe it's something to put in their ear," Suggs said. "We're competitors. We're expecting Cleveland's

best shot. We're not taking them lightly."

The Ravens need to win their last three games to be assured an AFC wild-card slot and Harbaugh couldn't give a hoot about Cleveland's desperate bid to avoid finishing winless.

"Their motivation is not really a concern of ours. It's our motivation that we're concerned with, and we have a lot to play for," Harbaugh said.

Browns coach Hue Jackson, a former assistant in Baltimore, knows too well that Harbaugh won't let the Ravens' 39-38 loss to Pittsburgh last Sunday night — or Cleveland's record — alter the Ravens' preparation for this game.

"That's not John's style," Jackson said. "John's a week-to-week guy, and last week is over. He knows they're playing a pro team at our venue, so he's going to have those guys ready to go."

It's the playoffs or bust, and the journey begins in Cleveland. "It would be no different than

playing any other team in the league at this point of the season," safely Eric Weddle said. "We need a win to keep our playoff hopes alive. It just happens to be Cleveland."



GAIL BURTON/AP

Ravens defensive back Marlon Humphrey, right, celebrates an interception against the Lions on Dec. 3. As a member of the Alabama football team, Humphrey learned not to underestimate the underdogs. Now he finds himself in a similar situation entering Sunday's game against the winless Cleveland Browns.

Joe Flacco said. "It could be better for us at this point, but we're excited about the opportunity."

Alex Collins made his Ravens debut against the Browns on Sept. 17, rushing seven times for 42 yards in a 24-10 victory. He's a starter now, and wise enough to know that Cleveland is going to give Baltimore its best shot.

"I know they're going to be coming at us," Collins said, "so we're going to do the same thing."

## Rams still in control of NFC West fate after loss

By DAN GREENSPAN  
Associated Press

THOUSAND OAKS, Calif. — The Los Angeles Rams have not lost consecutive games this season under Sean McVay, something the first-year coach attributes to the team's mental toughness.

That resolve will be tested this week against the Seattle Seahawks after Sunday's 43-35 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles, a seven-day span that could decide whether the Rams host a playoff game for the first time since the 2003 season in St. Louis.

"The thing that you have liked about this team so much is they have always responded the right way after we haven't gotten the outcomes that we like," McVay said Monday. "I think we are a mentally tough team. We are a connected team that stays together. We'll respond and bounce back the right way."

A win over the Eagles would have given the Rams (9-4) a two-game lead in the NFC West over the Seahawks, who lost 30-24 at the Jacksonville Jaguars. Seattle holds the head-to-head tiebreaker after its 16-10 win in Los Angeles on Oct. 8.

The Rams also could have gained a tie-breaker over the Eagles in the push for a first-round bye. They hold the edge over the NFC South-leading New Orleans Saints thanks to a 26-20 win on Nov. 26.

Instead, the division title could easily come down to the outcome in Seattle. A loss would leave the Rams needing the Seahawks to lose at least one of their final two wins.

Facing the Seahawks might be the best way to get over a loss in a playoff-type atmosphere.

"We've got a great opportunity with the things that took place yesterday to still be in first place in our division and go to a great Seattle team and get a chance to try to go win our 10th game and try to stay on top in the division," McVay said. "It's going to be a great challenge. There's still

a lot to play for. In spite of the disappointing outcome, our guys certainly aren't discouraged."

The Rams will head to the Pacific Northwest with injury concerns on the offensive line and as defensive back. Left tackle Andrew Whitworth and right tackle Rob Havenstein are both dealing with MCL sprains that McVay described as "mild." Whitworth returned to the game after getting hurt in the first half. Havenstein left early in the fourth quarter.

"They'll be day to day," McVay said. "Fortunately for us, it didn't result in something that was going to be season-ending."

To address their secondary after losing cornerback Kayvon Webster for the season with a ruptured Achilles tendon, the Rams re-signed cornerback Dominique Hatfield to the practice squad. Hatfield, an undrafted rookie who has appeared in 11 games, was waived from the active roster on Saturday.

There was a bit of positive news, as cornerback Trumaine Johnson is not in concussion protocol. Instead, it was a stinger that knocked Johnson out against the Eagles.



MARK J. TERRILL/AP

Rams wide receiver Cooper Kupp scores ahead of Eagles cornerback Jalen Mills during the first half Sunday in Los Angeles.

NFL

# Cornerback conflicts

Tensions between position, wide receivers have led to high-profile flare-ups this season

By HOWARD FENDRICH

Associated Press

**W**hen the Jalen Ramsey vs. A.J. Green, and Aqib Talib vs. Michael Crabtree in-game tussles played out, Pro Football Hall of Fame defensive back Ronnie Lott thought back to advice he received decades ago, before his San Francisco 49ers faced the Dallas Cowboys.

"A buddy of mine, Dennis Thurman, who played for the Cowboys, called me up before we played them and said, 'Do not get into a talking match with (receivers) Butch Johnson or Drew Pearson.' So I didn't. He was like, 'Stay focused on the game,'" Lott said. "I'm sure that some coach or somebody said, 'Don't get caught up in that' to the guys involved in things this season."

"Whatever the coaches said didn't work."

Seems conflicts between cornerbacks and wideouts are simply unavoidable. It is a unique dynamic in NFL games week after week: On play after play, they match up 1-on-1, with plenty of grabbing and shoving and, yes, yapping mixed in. The tension escalates, especially if one is really outplaying the other.

"It can be like an Ali-Frazier moment," said Lott, a cornerback and safety from 1981-94. "My rookie year, I remember having confrontations. They could be around the biggest or the littlest thing."

Broncos cornerback Talib and Raiders receiver Crabtree served one-week suspensions after getting into a fight during a game — a reprise of their skirmish last season. Both times, Talib ripped a gold chain off Crabtree's neck. In another much-discussed episode, Jacksonville's Ramsey and Cincinnati's Green were ejected after a clash that looked straight out of a wrestling ring.

"There's a lot of passion and emotions out of those two positions. It happens a lot in training camp and things like that, same deal," Minnesota Vikings receiver Adam Thielen said. "Even when you're going against your own teammates, it brings a lot of emotion out of you, especially when you're a competitor and you don't like to lose."

The two episodes this season brought to mind other high-profile dustups. Josh Norman vs. Odell Beckham Jr. Or Andre Johnson vs. Cortland Finnegan.

These spats are at least in part a result of what Redskins cornerback Norman describes as a world of constant chatter, gamesmanship and one-upmanship.

"If you stop them, you come back and say something. Then they catch the ball, and they come back and say something. You play sound, fundamental defense and get aggressive with guys. They don't like it and they push back. You push back," Norman said. "And before you know it, there you go."

He was a Panthers cornerback in 2015 when he engaged in a violent back-and-forth with Giants receiver Beckham.

Norman sees these CB vs. WR flare-ups through the prism of his job, which he says is made harder by the NFL's anti-defense rules and officiating.

"They don't want defenders to be successful. And [fans] don't want a guy to stop their man that they put in fantasy football. When we do, we're the 'worst' ever. We're 'trash.' But if we let someone catch the ball, we're 'trash,' too. It's ridiculous," Norman said. "We can't win as defensive backs. It's not set up for us to. But when we do win,



Above: Denver Broncos cornerback Aqib Talib, left, fights Oakland Raiders wide receiver Michael Crabtree during a Nov. 26 game in Oakland, Calif. Right: Cincinnati Bengals cornerback Josh Shaw, left, shoves Washington Redskins wide receiver Pierre Garcon. The dynamic between cornerbacks and wideouts is a unique one in the league, with plenty of grabbing, shoving and trash-talking on every play.

and there is that little success that we have for ourselves, then we need to show it. Like, 'Look! Take that!'"

Players on both sides of the ball say the physical and mental back-and-forth both contribute to bad feelings.

"There's a lot that goes out there on the field that's behind the scenes," Raiders cornerback TJ Carrie said. "You really don't pay attention to it until there's an altercation."

Whether it's a cornerback constantly jamming a receiver off the line or a run-blocking wideout doing the shoving, those plays add up. That's aside from when a receiver isn't getting his catches, or even his targets. Or a DB keeps giving up gains.

It all can lead to frustration — and lashing out.

"It's been going on for centuries," Cardinals receiver Larry Fitzgerald said.

He knows some defenders will "try to add unnecessary brutality to the game," he said, and there's no way to avoid that.

But when it comes to trash talk, Fitzgerald said: "I'm not about that. If you call out my name, I'm not even going to acknowledge you. I just walk away."

Certainly, these conflicts happen at other positions.

Still, as Redskins cornerback-turned-safety DeAngelo Hall noted, it's harder to notice individual matchups along the line of scrimmage.

"They are kind of out there by ourselves, so when we're talking or battling, you can really see two guys face to face — as opposed



to five vs. five, having the whole O-line and whole D-line there. I don't know if there's more confrontation there than a defensive end and a left tackle, for example, but it's definitely more noticeable when receivers and DBs get to chirpin', because we're isolated," Hall said.

"At the end of the day, it's me vs. you on that island."

Hall, whose 43 career interceptions lead active players, remembers when he was with the Falcons and faced the divisional rival Panthers and now-retired receiver Steve Smith.

"Me and Steve had to be separated a couple of times," Hall said. "It was always

almost to blows. Then, after or before the game, it was all cordial. Just that competitiveness of me and him wanting to beat each other down sparked those intense exchanges."

As for some of his other past foes? "Me and [Terrell Owens] didn't do a lot of talking. We just tried to rip each other's heads off. Me and Chad Johnson did a lot of talking, but it was all jokingly," Hall said and paused, before adding with a chuckle: "And, of course, we tried to rip each other's heads off."

AP Pro Football Writers Dave Campbell and Josh Dubow and Sports Writers Joe Kay and Bob Baum contributed to this report.



# GAMEDAY

WEEK 15

TELEVISION GAMES



**Green Bay Packers (7-6)**  
at **Carolina Panthers (9-4)**

AFN-Sports2

7 p.m. Sunday CET

3 a.m. Monday JKT

**Series:** Packers lead 9-5.

**Last meeting:** Panthers beat Packers 37-29, Nov. 8, 2015.

**Notes:** Packers QB Aaron Rodgers expected to play for first time since Oct. 15 (broken collarbone). ... WR Davante Adams tied for second in NFL with nine TD catches. ... Panthers have won three straight at home. ... Panthers' Cam Newton leads NFL QBs in yards rushing (585) and has five TDs rushing.



**Cincinnati Bengals (5-8)**  
at **Minnesota Vikings (10-3)**

AFN-Sports

7 p.m. Sunday CET

3 a.m. Monday JKT

**Series:** Vikings lead 6-6.

**Last meeting:** Bengals beat Vikings 42-14, Dec. 22, 2013.

**Notes:** Bengals have never won in five all-time trips to Minnesota. Vikings were division champions in four of those seasons: 1977, 1989, 1998, 2009. ... Vikings can clinch NFC North for second time in three years with win or loss by Packers and Lions. ... Combined record of teams Vikings have lost to is 27-12.

**Also on AFN:**

**Miami Dolphins (6-7)** at **Buffalo Bills (7-6)**, AFN-Atlantic, 7 p.m. Sunday CET, 3 a.m. Monday JKT

**Tennessee Titans (8-5)** at **San Francisco 49ers (3-10)**, AFN-Atlantic, 10:25 p.m. Sunday CET, 6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

## EXPANDED STANDINGS

### American Conference

	East			West			W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div	
	W	L	T	W	L	T												
New England	10	3	0	763	368	250	240	290	5-2-0	2-4-0	5-4-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	Div 1
Baltimore	7	6	0	538	240	250	5-2-0	2-4-0	5-4-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	Div 1
Miami	6	7	0	462	316	202	4-3-0	2-4-0	5-4-0	5-4-0	1-3-0	2-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	Div 1
N.Y. Jets	5	8	0	385	266	311	4-3-0	1-5-1	5-5-0	5-5-0	0-3-0	2-3-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	Div 1
<b>South</b>																		
Jacksonville	9	4	0	694	326	202	5-2-0	4-2-0	8-2-0	8-2-0	1-2-0	3-1-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	Div 2
Tennessee	7	6	1	615	316	202	5-2-0	3-2-0	8-2-0	8-2-0	1-2-0	3-1-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	Div 2
Houston	9	9	0	308	312	325	3-4-0	2-4-0	5-6-0	5-6-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	Div 2
Indianapolis	3	10	0	231	212	124	3-4-0	1-6-0	2-7-0	2-7-0	1-3-0	1-4-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	Div 2
<b>North</b>																		
Pittsburgh	11	2	0	846	326	251	5-1-0	6-1-0	8-1-0	8-1-0	3-1-0	5-0-0	5-1-0	5-2-0	8-2-0	2-1-0	3-1-0	Div 3
Baltimore	7	6	0	538	226	316	4-2-0	3-4-0	5-4-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	2-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	1-2-0	Div 3
Cincinnati	5	8	0	385	226	271	3-4-0	2-4-0	5-6-0	5-6-0	0-2-0	2-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	Div 3
Cleveland	0	13	0	199	316	307	0-7-0	0-6-0	0-10-0	0-10-0	0-3-0	0-4-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	Div 3
<b>West</b>																		
Kansas City	7	6	0	538	326	205	4-2-0	3-4-0	5-4-0	5-4-0	2-2-0	3-2-0	5-1-0	5-2-0	8-2-0	2-1-0	3-1-0	Div 4
L.A. Chargers	7	6	0	462	246	304	4-3-0	2-4-0	5-6-0	5-6-0	1-1-0	2-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	4-3-0	Div 4
Oakland	6	7	0	462	226	304	4-3-0	2-4-0	5-6-0	5-6-0	1-1-0	2-3-0	3-6-0	3-6-0	3-6-0	3-6-0	3-6-0	Div 4
Denver	4	9	0	308	226	316	3-0-0	6-3-0	3-7-0	3-7-0	1-2-0	2-3-0	3-0-0	3-0-0	3-0-0	3-0-0	3-0-0	Div 4

Game capsules  
compiled from AP

**Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger**

DON WRIGHT/AP



**Also on AFN:**

**Miami Dolphins (6-7)** at **Buffalo Bills (7-6)**, AFN-Atlantic, 7 p.m. Sunday CET, 3 a.m. Monday JKT

**Tennessee Titans (8-5)** at **San Francisco 49ers (3-10)**, AFN-Atlantic, 10:25 p.m. Sunday CET, 6:25 a.m. Monday JKT

### National Conference

	East			West			W	L	T	Pct	PF	PA	Home	Away	AFC	NFC	Div	
	W	L	T	W	L	T												
y-Philadelphia	11	2	0	846	404	250	6-0-0	5-2-0	9-1-0	5-1-0	5-2-0	250	6-0-0	5-2-0	9-1-0	2-1-0	4-0-0	Div 1
Dallas	7	6	0	538	316	294	3-4-0	3-2-0	5-4-0	3-4-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	5-4-0	4-2-0	1-2-0	4-1-0	1-2-0	Div 1
Washington	5	8	0	385	316	294	3-4-0	3-2-0	5-4-0	3-4-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	4-6-0	4-2-0	1-2-0	4-1-0	1-2-0	Div 1
N.Y. Jets	2	11	0	154	199	321	1-5-0	1-6-0	2-1-0	1-6-0	1-5-0	1-6-0	0-9-0	2-2-0	0-4-0	0-4-0	0-4-0	Div 1
<b>South</b>																		
New Orleans	9	4	0	692	370	263	5-1-0	4-3-0	7-3-0	5-1-0	2-1-0	3-1-0	7-3-0	2-1-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	Div 2
Atlanta	8	5	0	692	370	263	4-3-0	3-2-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	2-1-0	2-1-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	2-1-0	2-1-0	2-1-0	Div 2
Tampa Bay	4	9	0	308	264	312	3-3-0	1-6-0	2-7-0	2-7-0	1-3-0	2-3-0	2-7-0	2-7-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	1-3-0	Div 2
Minnesota	10	3	0	769	398	370	5-1-0	5-2-0	8-2-0	5-1-0	5-2-0	2-1-0	5-1-0	5-2-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	Div 3
Detroit	7	6	0	538	326	329	4-2-0	4-2-0	5-4-0	4-2-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	5-4-0	4-2-0	1-2-0	3-1-0	1-2-0	Div 3
Green Bay	7	6	0	538	285	302	4-3-0	3-3-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	1-2-0	3-2-0	1-2-0	Div 3
Chicago	4	9	0	308	224	274	2-5-0	2-4-0	1-9-0	3-0-0	4-0-4	2-4-0	1-9-0	3-0-0	4-0-4	4-0-4	4-0-4	Div 3
L.A. Rams	9	4	0	692	398	370	4-3-0	5-1-0	6-4-0	3-0-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	6-4-0	3-0-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	Div 4
Seattle	8	5	0	615	314	252	4-3-0	4-3-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	2-2-0	4-3-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	2-2-0	Div 4
Arizona	6	7	0	462	231	317	4-3-0	4-2-0	5-6-0	4-3-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	5-6-0	4-3-0	3-1-0	2-3-0	3-1-0	Div 4
San Francisco	3	10	0	231	231	316	1-5-0	2-5-0	2-9-0	1-1-0	0-5-0	1-1-0	2-9-0	1-1-0	0-5-0	0-5-0	0-5-0	Div 4
<b>North</b>																		
L.A. Rams	9	4	0	692	398	370	4-3-0	5-1-0	6-4-0	3-0-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	6-4-0	3-0-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	3-1-0	Div 5
Seattle	8	5	0	615	314	252	4-3-0	4-3-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	2-2-0	4-3-0	5-4-0	4-3-0	3-1-0	2-3-0	3-1-0	Div 5
Arizona	6	7	0	462	231	317	4-3-0	4-2-0	5-6-0	4-3-0	2-2-0	4-2-0	5-6-0	4-3-0	3-1-0	2-3-0	3-1-0	Div 5
San Francisco	3	10	0	231	231	316	1-5-0	2-5-0	2-9-0	1-1-0	0-5-0	1-1-0	2-9-0	1-1-0	0-5-0	0-5-0	0-5-0	Div 5

### REST OF THE SCHEDULE

Saturday's games

Chicago at Detroit

L.A. Chargers at Kansas City

Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants

Football at Jacksonville

N.Y. Jets at New Orleans

Baltimore at Tampa Bay

Miami at Kansas City

L.A. Chargers at N.Y. Jets

Detroit at Cincinnati

Football at New England

Jacksonville at San Francisco

Baltimore at Dallas

Pittsburgh at Oakland at Philadelphia

Monday's game

Atlanta at Tampa Bay

Indianapolis at Baltimore

Sunday, Dec. 23

Minnesota at Green Bay

Sunday, Dec. 24

Cleveland at Atlanta

Football at Jacksonville

Miami at Carolina

L.A. Chargers at N.Y. Jets

Detroit at Cincinnati

Football at New England

Jacksonville at San Francisco

Baltimore at Dallas

Pittsburgh at Oakland at Philadelphia

Monday, Dec. 25

# SPORTS



## Big-game mentality

Top-ranked Clemson returns to practice with focus on Alabama » **Page 58**

# REAL STEEL

Pittsburgh offense finally back at full strength for showdown with Patriots

BY WILL GRAVES  
Associated Press

**T**wo snaps in, Le'Veon Bell knew he was done, that the groin injury that the Pittsburgh Steelers running back tried to ignore during his team's run to the AFC championship game last January could be ignored no longer.

Bell tried to grind it out.

Emphasis on tried.

By the middle of the second quarter he was on the sideline for good, a chilly bystander as the New England Patriots ran away with a 36-17 win on their way to yet another Super Bowl title.

"It sucked for me," Bell said.

The rest of the short-handed Steelers, too.

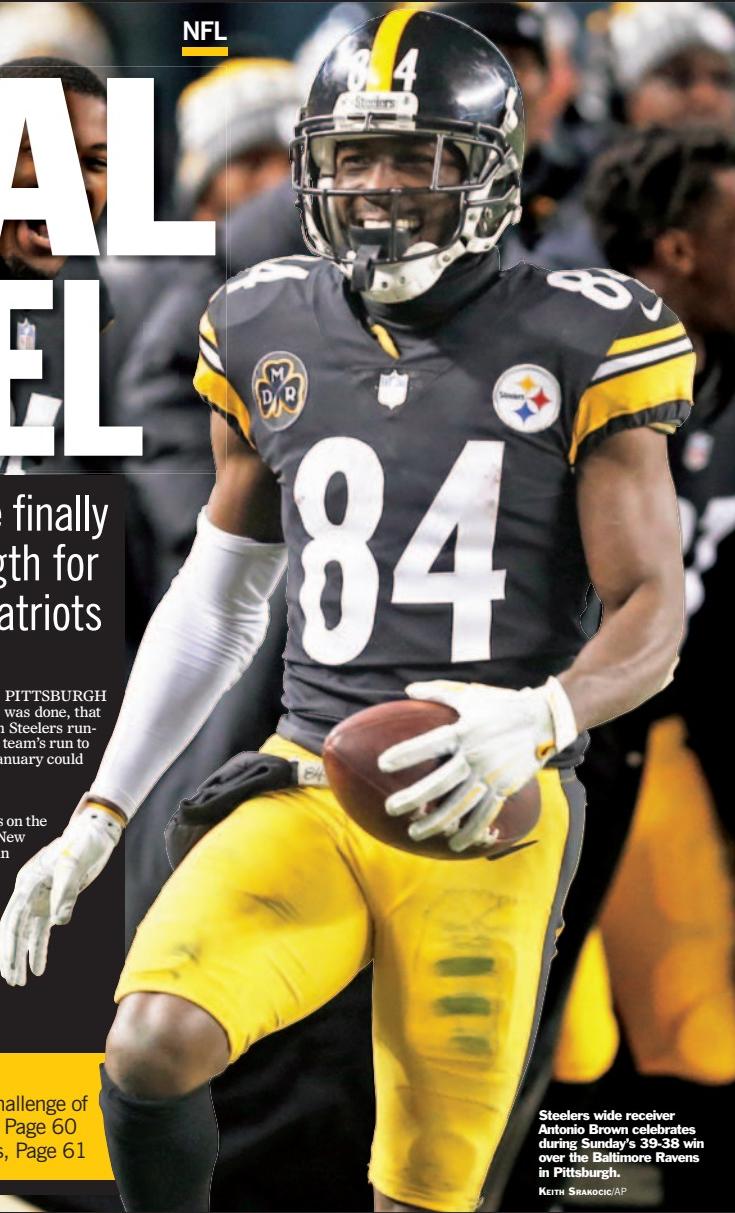
Eleven months later a rematch looms at Heinz Field when the Patriots (10-3) visit the AFC North champions on Sunday, a showdown that will find Pittsburgh's "Killer B's" on the field together against New England for the first time.

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- Foles uniquely prepared for challenge of replacing Wentz in Philadelphia, Page 60
- Ravens can't overlook Browns, Page 61

NFL



Steelers wide receiver Antonio Brown celebrates during Sunday's 39-38 win over the Baltimore Ravens in Pittsburgh.

KEITH SRAKOCIC/AP

**Pistons struggling after starting season hot** » **Page 55**

